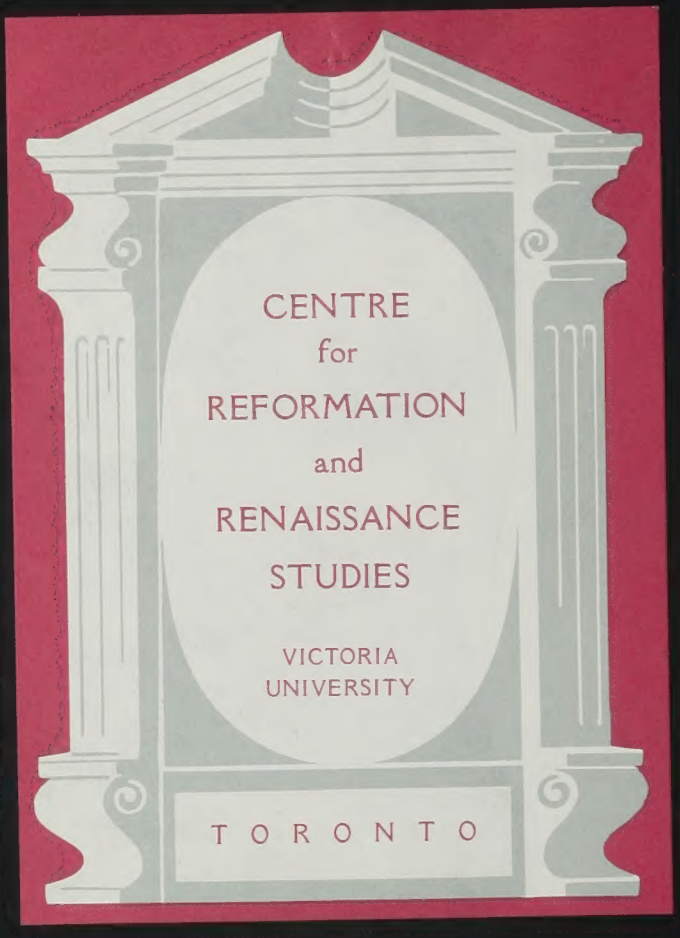


Old English Social Life as told by the Parish Register

T. F. THISELTON DYER


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AS TOLD BY THE

PARISH REGISTERS.

BY

T. F. THISELTON-DYER, M.A. Oxon.

AUTHOR OF 'CHURCH LORE GLEANINGS,' ETC.



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SOCIAL LIFE AS TOLD BY THE PARISH REGISTERS.

INTRODUCTION.

AS almost unique records of the domestic history of the English people in days gone by, the parish registers are of priceless value. It is only of late years, however, that their real importance has been duly estimated, and means suggested for their security and preservation in time to come. Indeed, it must ever be a source of deep regret to the historian and antiquary that such precious documents should have been for so many years the objects of careless indifference, their safe-keeping only too frequently having been committed either to an ignorant parish clerk, or to an apathetic parson. Hence we find repeated notices of the mutilation and partial destruction of registers, the result in most cases of neglect. Mr. Bigland, in writing on the subject, mentions his having to consult a register, and his surprise when directed to the cottage of a poor labouring

man, as clerk of the parish, where he found the document in the drawer of an old table, amongst a lot of rubbish. In a Northamptonshire parish, an old parchment register was discovered in a cottage, some of the pages of which were tacked together as a covering for the tester of a bedstead. And in another parish the clerk, being a tailor, in order to supply himself with measures, had cut out more than sixteen leaves of the old register. In an Essex parish, the clerk not having any ink or paper to make an extract for an applicant, observed, 'Oh, you may as well have the leaf as it is,' and, taking out a pocket-knife, he gave the applicant the entire two pages.*

It is also on record that an enterprising grocer, being clerk of the parish, found the register invaluable for wrapping up his grocery commodities; and it is told how a curate's wife used the leaves of the parish register for making her husband's kettle-holders. A member of the Harleian Society tells a curious story of the Blythburgh registers.† It appears that when Suckling wrote his Suffolk History, the Blythburgh Church chest was filled with important deeds, and the registers were nearly perfect. Now only a few leaves remain of the register prior to the year 1700. The report is that a former clerk, in showing this fine old church to visitors, presented those curious in old papers and autographs with a leaf from the register, or some other document, as a memento of the visit.

* Burn, 'History of Parish Registers.'

† See the *Standard*, January 8, 1880.

Amongst some of the further disasters that have befallen these ill-used records, we may allude to their being occasionally sold as waste-paper, their destruction by fire at the parson's residence, and their complete loss through being stolen.

In a curious work by Francis Sadler (1738, p. 54), entitled 'Exactions of Parish Fees discovered,' it is recorded how one Philips, late clerk of Lambeth, ran away with the register-book, whereby the parish became great sufferers, for no person born in the parish could have a transcript of the register to prove himself heir to an estate.

In the *Norwich Mercury* of August 17, 1776, this notice occurs:

'*Wroxham Church.* — Whereas in night between 5th and 6th of this month the Parish Church of Wroxham was forcibly entered, and the chest in chancel broken, from whence the surplice was taken and torn in pieces, and two books, out of which were torn and carried away several leaves, containing the register of christenings and burials within the said parish from the year 1732 to the present time: The minister and churchwardens and inhabitants of the said parish offer a reward of twenty-five guineas to any person who will give information whereby the person or persons, or any one of them, concerned as above, may be convicted thereof, which reward of twenty-five guineas I promise hereby to pay on conviction.

'Daniel Collyer, Vicar.'

Some years ago the registers of Kew, containing the baptism and marriage of the late Duke of

Kent, the father of her present Majesty, and other royal births, deaths and marriages, were stolen.

And the following extract from Archdeacon Musgrave's Charge to his clergy in May, 1865, is a striking proof, if such were necessary, of the sad havoc which has in the course of past years befallen these parochial archives: 'In the exercise of my duty, I had to assist in recovering some registers carried off to a far-distant part of the country by a late incumbent, and long detained, to the great uneasiness and apprehension of the parish. I might also tell of a missing register—the one in use immediately before the present Marriage Act—which, at the cost of much anxious inquiry, I traced to another riding, and eventually found among the books and papers of a deceased incumbent. Or I might advert to a mass of neglected, mutilated sheets, with no cover, incidentally discovered by myself in an outhouse of a parsonage in Craven; or, to add but one other instance, which, if it were not too irreparable a mischief, might provoke a smile. I have seen the entries of half a century cut away from a parchment register by a sacrilegious parish clerk, to subserve the purpose of his ordinary occupation as a tailor.'

And Mr. T. P. Taswell-Langmead, in the *Law Magazine and Review* for May, 1878, reminds his readers that 'fire, tempest, burglary, theft, damp, mildew, careless or malicious injury, criminal erasure and interpolation, loss, and all the other various accidents which have been surely but gradually bringing about the destruction of these registers, are still in active operation.' On

the importance of the parochial registers as legal evidence, he adds, 'it is unnecessary to enlarge. Dispersed all over the kingdom, the registers are inaccessible to genuine searchers, unless at a large expenditure of time and money, and are in the hands of custodians who frequently cannot decipher the old Court-hand and crabbed entries of the early Latin. When required to be produced in court for legal purposes, the registers are exposed to the risks incidental to transmission from remote country parishes; and while suitors are put to special expense, the clerical custodians are taken away from their proper parochial duties.'*

Annexed to the transcript of the Hitchin parish registers for the years 1665 to 1667 is a strip of parchment containing the following note:

'These are to certifie all persons whom it doth or may concerne, that the regestry for Christnings, Marriages and Burialls in the Parish of Hitchin, Countie of Hertford, Diocesse of Lincolne, and Archdeaconry of Huntingdon, through the carelessnesse and neglect of former Regesters, is wholly lost for the space of seventeene yeares and upwards last past, that is, from the first day of February one thousand six hundred fowerty and eight to the first day of August one thousand six hundred sixty and five.'

In one parish, the children of the village school had their primers bound in leaves of parchment, which led to the discovery of the practice of the parish clerk and schoolmaster of the day, who

* See the *Antiquary*, 1880, vol. i., p. 20, and *Notes and Queries*, 6th series, *passim*.

favoured certain 'goodies' of the village by giving them the parchment leaves for wrapping their knitting-pins; and in the Report of the House of Commons Committee, in 1835, it is recorded how one sporting parson cut his parchment leaves into labels for the game which he sent to his friends. In another parish, the register was wanting on the accession of a new vicar, who found that it had been thrown into the village pond during a parish dispute; and there is a tradition handed down that the wife of some parson, rector or curate of Dean, being angry with her husband, revenged herself, as she thought, upon him, but in reality on poor posterity, by throwing a register-book or books into the fire.

But how registers should have, occasionally, come to be sold has been a puzzle to many antiquaries. Thus, the register of Shackerstone, which extends from the year 1558 to the year 1630, is in the Bodleian Library. It was purchased from a gentleman at Beverley about March, 1873, but how it found its way into Yorkshire does not appear.* The parish register of Somerby, extending from 1601 to 1715, is preserved in the British Museum. It was purchased in April, 1862, from Mr. C. Devon, but how it came into his possession is not told. According to the *Journal of the British Archæological Association* (for March, 1882), the register of Papworth-Everard, Cambridgeshire, 1565-1692, was also acquired by the

* See Burn, 'History of Parish Registers,' 1862, pp. 46, 47. See *Notes and Queries*, 6th series, vol. v., p. 331.

British Museum. Many similar instances might be quoted of registers having been purchased ; the register of Stevington and part of that of Nuthurst being in the British Museum. The register of marriages, 1662-72, of another Cambridgeshire parish, St. Mary's, Whittlesey, also fell by purchase into the hands of an antiquarian bookseller, who returned it to the parish. The register of North Elmham, from 1538 to 1631, was taken from the parish chest some years ago, and was afterwards purchased by Mr. Robert Fitch, who restored it to the parish on August 5, 1861.

And, it may be remembered, there was sold at Messrs. Puttick's auction-room, on April 14, 1860, 'The Original Register of Christenings, Marriages, and Burials of the Parish of Kingston-upon-Thames, from June, 1541, to December, 1556.' In the middle of the volume might be seen this entry : '*Mem.*—That I, John Bartlett, Clerke, entrynge to be Curate of thys parishe of Kynston-upon-Temyse, began myne entrans the 29 day of September, A.D. 1547, to kepe ye boke accordynge to the ordeynance sett forth for chrystenynges, weddynges, and bureynges.'

The registers did not wholly escape the sad effects of the ravages of war ; thus, the earlier register of Lassington, Gloucestershire, contains this entry : 'The old Register Bookes belonging to the Parish of Lassington were embezzled and lost in the late times of confusion, criminell divisions, and unhappy warrs ;' and the leaves of the parish register of Wimpole, Cambridgeshire, containing the entries from 1604 to the end of 1616 were

torn out during the civil wars by the Parliamentary soldiers; and the following memorandum is found in the register of Tarporley, Cheshire, in explanation of a break in the entries from 1643 to 1648: 'This Intermission hapned by reason of the Great Wars obliterating memorials, wasting fortunes, and slaughtering persons of all sorts.' Another register remarks that nothing could be entered during the Civil Wars, 'as neither minister nor people could quietly stay at home for one party or the other;' and the register of Rotherby thus notices the disturbed state of the country in the time of Charles I.: '1643, Bellum! 1644, Bellum! Interruption, Persecution! . . . Sequestration by John Mussen Yeoman and John Yates Taylor! 1649, 1650, 1651, 1652, 1653, 1654, Sequestration! Thomas Silverwood intruder.'

Similar entries occur in the register of St. Mary's, Beverley. Under June 30, 1643, it is stated: 'Our great scrimage in Beverley, and God gave us the victory at that tyme, ever blessed be God;' and the dangers of war on every side caused the parson to exclaim, July 30, 1643:

> 'All our lives now at ye stake,
> Lord deliver us, for Christ His sake.'

Paul Church, Cornwall, was burnt by the Spaniards in the year 1595, and the registers prior to that event were destroyed. Indeed, the registers generally seem to have had a rough time; and taking also into account the many other vicissitudes to which they were exposed, it is a matter of congratulation that

they have survived as well as they have. Another reason for the registers not being kept is given in a memorandum in the Loughborough register: 'Heare is to be noted and remembered that from the 10 day of April in Anno 1554 there was no Register keepte, by reason of the alteration of Religion and often chaunginge of Priests in those times and yeares, until the first yeare of the raigne of our Soveraigne Ladie the Queen's Majesty Elizabeth by the Grace of God, Queen of England, Fraunce and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, and until the yeare of God, 1558.'

Although, it is true, many registers have been destroyed owing to causes over which their custodians had no control, yet it is only too apparent that culpable negligence and indifference have had a large share in bringing about the present lamentable result. A curious instance of this kind is given by Coventry, 'On Evidence' (1832, p. 49): 'In a case just laid before the writer, it is stated that the parson's greyhound had made her nest in the chest containing the parish registers, and that, as the reverend gentleman had a greater affection for the progeny of his companion than the offspring of his parishioners, the requisite registers of baptism, etc., had become obliterated and partially destroyed.' The early registers of a parish in Kent have been lost, 'having been kept at a public-house, to be shown, as they contained some curious entries as to tythes;' whereas in another we are informed that the clerk employed the leaves of the parish records, amongst other purposes, for 'singeing a goose.'

But although many parsons may allow the registers to remain in the custody of the parish clerks, the difficulties which may ensue from this practice are illustrated in the case of Arundell *v.* Fowler:

'A witness on the trial stated that he went to K. for the purpose of comparing a certificate of burial with the parish register, and was directed to the clerk's house, and there saw a person who said he was parish clerk, and who produced to him a book containing entries of burials with which he compared the certificate: Held that as Stat. 52 George III., c. 150, directs the parish registers to be kept by the clergyman, and as no explanation was given of the book being in possession of the clerk, it had not been produced from the proper custody, and that the evidence was inadmissible.'

The cases, too, of erasure and interpolation, which are of frequent occurrence, not only cause the defeat of justice, but in numerous instances such mutilations have been done for fraudulent purposes. As Lord Eldon once remarked: 'Those persons who might not have had their attention particularly directed to the subject could form but little idea of the enormous sums which were annually dependent, and the succession to which entirely depended upon the accuracy of the parish registers. He had lately been in communication with a gentleman who was for some years Rector of Sandon, in the county of Stafford, and who stated that during his period of incumbency—extending only over fifteen years—sums exceeding

£40,000—the parish containing only about 600 inhabitants—were dependent upon the accuracy of the parish registers, and many persons who had succeeded to these large sums of money were persons in the humblest sphere of life.' And Lord Chief Justice Best was of the same opinion: 'All the property in this country, or a large part of it, depends on registers.' In the Angel case, where something like a million sterling was at stake, Baron Alderson said in 'Walker *v.* Beauchamp,' 'there was an entry of Harriet Angel in the original register which was alleged to be forged, as the name of Mary Ann Angel was in the copy of the Bishop's registry, and the labouring man who had altered in the parish book Mary Ann Angel to Harriet Angel was discomfited by the evidence of the Bishop's transcript. Some of the registers, it is said,* 'produced in support of the claim to the Barony of Chandos presented very suspicious appearances. In the register of St. Michael's, Harbledown, a large blot appeared upon the entry of the baptism of the second son of John Bridges and Maria his wife in the year 1606, but enough was left to show it had been Edward, the son of John. The case of the claimant turned upon this Edward. There appeared to be recent mutilations of the registers, and interpolations were suspected to have been made in the Archbishop's duplicates.' A case was tried in the Court of Common Pleas, involving a fortune of £100,000, between parties of the name of Oldham, in which 'in the register sent to the Bishop's registry two

* Hubback, 'On Evidence,' 1884 p. 486.

persons were stated to have been married on a particular day, but in the parish register there seemed to have been an erasure in the exact place corresponding with the entry of the marriage in the copy.'

The Huntingdon peerage case was sorely perplexing because many leaves from the books of Christchurch, Hants, had been used by a curate's wife to line kettle-holders. There is the case of Miss Chudleigh, who, for an iniquitous purpose, wished to conceal her marriage with Lieutenant Hervey. Accompanied by a female friend, she made a visit to Laniston, where the marriage had taken place, and desired to see the register; whilst her friend engaged the attention of the parish clerk, she cut out the page containing the marriage entry, and with that important document returned to London. By a strange irony of fate, the Lieutenant became Earl of Bristol. To be plain Mrs. Hervey was one thing, to be Countess of Bristol another. The lady, however, was equal to the emergency, she took another journey to Laniston, and by the assistance of an attorney, and a bribe to the parish clerk, she got the abstracted leaf reinserted in its proper place in the register. In the Leigh peerage case, in like manner, a baptism which had been expunged from the parish books of Wigan was found in the Bishop's transcript, and by its presence decided the suit.

In the registers of St. Peter's, Cornhill, under June 25, 1673, this entry occurs: 'Osmund Mordaunt, son of John Lord Mordaunt of Fulham, Middx., and Mary Bulger of Lurgan, Nr. Gorey in Ireland, were married this day.' In

respect of this entry there is preserved in the register a letter from Sir John Page Wood, Bart., Rector of St. Peter's, dated November 30, 1829, in which he says: 'On minutely investigating the register of marriage of one Osmond Mordaunt with Mary Bulger, dated 1673, I am clearly of opinion that the said entry of marriage is a gross and clumsy forgery. My opinion is formed on the discrepancies which exist between the said entry and those of the same period before and after it. Its handwriting is evidently more modern than those near it; it is not entered like the others, with a specification as to the ceremony's having been performed by the authority of banns or license; the parchment it is written on is thinner in substance than the rest of the book, as if an erasure had been made. The entry is made at the bottom of the page, and there is no signature thereon, either of incumbent or churchwarden, which occurs in every page of that period.' A pedigree is also given, drawn up by some member of the Heralds' College, by which it appears that Osmond Mordaunt was not more than eighteen years old in 1677, and hence would only have been fourteen at the time of this reputed marriage. It may be added that in the baptisms under June 29, 1674, is this entry: 'Peter, the Son of Osmund and Mary.' But it is in a different handwriting to the other entries, is on the last line at the bottom of the page, and has evidently been inserted after the page had been signed 'Will Beveridge,' as one of the figures of the date crosses that signature, and in every other page a small

space is left between the last entry and his signature.

In the abstract of the returns, printed by authority of Parliament in the year 1833, relative to the number of volumes, dates, and state of preservation of the registers, down to the year 1812, then in possession of the parish priest, some very interesting facts were given on this point, and the incumbent of Chickerell thus wrote: 'I have minutely examined the registers of this parish, and hope there are no others in the kingdom in which so little confidence should be placed. There are only two old books, one of parchment, the other of paper, the former sadly mutilated and interpolated, the latter so defective that during my incumbency of one year many certificates have been requested to no purpose, for want of entries. The omissions, I suspect, may be attributed to carelessness; the abuses, to frauds which have been committed on the lord of the manor in favour of the copyholders; but to particularize all of them would be a very unprofitable work.' Another parson, writing at the same period, tells how the church of Pinner, Middlesex, was broken open, and part of the registers destroyed; and of Berwick, Sussex, it is recorded that 'a register of baptisms [was] taken to Peasmarsh by the former minister, which has never been recovered,' and a similar cause for the absence of the register of Althorpe, Lincolnshire, is given: 'There are two register books of earlier date, which were taken away by the Archdeacon in the year 1824.'

It is impossible to say, too, how many a register

may have fallen a prey to damp and other ravages of time, as well as to religious and political troubles. The early registers of Huish-Champflower, for instance, are described 'as being mutilated and illegible, occasioned by a storm unroofing the church and wetting the contents of the parish chest'; and the return for Belstone Church, Devonshire, runs thus: 'There are several registers, the earliest dated 1552, but so irregular and damaged that no correct account can be given; about twenty years ago some of the register-books were burnt.' But occasionally a careful Vicar, as we learn from this injunction in the parish of Rodmarton, took care to keep the register from getting damp: 'If ye will have this book last, bee sure to aire it att the fire or in the sunne three or foure times a year, els it will grow dankish and rott; therefore look to it. It will not be amisse, when you find it dankish, to wipe over the leaves with a dry woollen cloath. This place is very much subject to dankishness; therefore, I say, look to it.'

Speaking of fire, it seems that many registers owe their destruction to this cause, that of West Lulworth, Dorset, having been burnt in the year 1780. At St. Bees, a fire broke out one Sunday morning in 1868, when some of the registers were destroyed, and the returns already quoted tell how 'the earlier registers of Little Thornham, Suffolk, were burnt in a fire which consumed the parsonage-house of a neighbouring parish.' One can only regret that an old usage in force at Spitalfields is not equally binding in other parishes. The follow-

ing statement was made in the year 1867, when an appeal was made by the churchwardens, owing to the danger to which the registers of that parish were for a long series of years subjected : 'By one of the canons governing ecclesiastical affairs, the churchwardens are bound to provide an iron chest in which to preserve the registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials, and until last summer it was on all hands believed that Spitalfields Church was supplied with a chest of the proper character. During the recent restoration, it was discovered that the supposed iron register-chest was a large stone box with iron doors ; and, if it had ever been subjected to the action of fire, there is no doubt that the extremely valuable and interesting registers of this parish from its creation in 1728 would have inevitably been destroyed.' The register-chest referred to was probably put up during the erection of the church, and was entirely covered with oak framing corresponding with the oak partitioning in the building.

It is a matter of satisfaction, however, to know that at last the value of these volumes of social and domestic history has been realized, and that in most parishes they are now carefully preserved as heirlooms of the past. The Harleian Society, also, taking into account the genealogical interest attaching to them, has undertaken their publication, and already the registers of certain City parishes have been given to the world, and thus permanently preserved for all generations to come. But, unfortunately, some of the parish registers which have been printed by private individuals

have not been published in their entirety, but only such extracts as were, in the opinion of the editor, worthy of note. As records of genealogical and historical value, all such imperfect publications are of comparatively little worth, and are interesting only so far as they illustrate the original documents.

It may be well here to note that the first orders for the provision of parochial registers date from the year 1538, and were rendered necessary in consequence of the dissolution of the religious houses and the cessation of their registers. The first was issued by the Vicar-General Cromwell, in the thirtieth year of Henry VIII., and this order was continued by fresh injunctions in the succeeding reigns of Edward VI., Elizabeth, and James I. During the confusion which existed in the reign of Charles I., parish registers were greatly neglected, and were for the first time regulated by Act of Parliament. And on Jan. 3, 1644-45 an ordinance was made that 'a fair register book of velim' should be provided in every parish, and that the names of all children baptized, and the time of their birth, and also the names of all persons married and buried, should be set down therein by the minister. During the Commonwealth, the system of leaving parochial registration to the clergy seems to have failed. Parliament again interfered, and registrars were appointed. At the Restoration, the charge of keeping the registers again devolved on the clergy, and has continued a part of their duty ever since.

Nothing appears to have been done with regard

to the parish registers in the reign of James II.; but in that of William III., in consequence of a duty being imposed on the various entries, the negligent and careless clergy were, for the first time, exposed to the terror of the common informer. Many of the registers, therefore, from this time seem to have been better kept, but as a great number of the clergy were not fully aware of the penalties to which they were subject through non-compliance with the law, in the fourth year of Queen Anne's reign an Act of Indemnity was found necessary.

In the year 1753 was passed the famous Marriage Act, called Lord Hardwicke's Act, still in force. By this Act, any person convicted of tampering with or destroying any register of marriage was to be deemed guilty of felony without benefit of clergy. In the year 1783 the Stamp Act was passed, which levied a tax upon every entry in the parish register, but it met with such opposition that it was repealed in the year 1794. By this Act the rich and poor were taxed alike, and the parson was placed in the invidious and unpopular light of a tax-gatherer. As the poor were often either unable or unwilling to pay the tax imposed upon them, the clergyman not unfrequently paid it out of his own pocket rather than run the risk of incurring the ill-will of his parishioners. No change of any material importance took place until the year 1812, when an Act, commonly known as Rose's Act, was passed for 'the better regulating and preserving parish and other registers'; and lastly, in the year

1836, a very stringent and salutary law was made, when it was required that henceforth all future registers should be kept in books specially provided for that purpose, and 'according to one uniform scheme set out in the schedules annexed to the Act.'

Since the passing of the Registration Act, in the year 1836, the value of the parish register as a public record has greatly diminished. The registration of births and deaths has superseded, as far as legal purposes are concerned, that of baptisms and burials; and every quarter a copy of the marriages is forwarded by the parson to the Registrar-General; one, too, of the well-known pair of green books, when filled, being likewise sent to the Registrar-General.

Such, briefly told, is the history of the parish register, but it is more especially with its contents that we are concerned, as illustrating in a variety of ways the manners and customs of former times. The present printed forms for the several entries of baptisms, etc., it must be remembered, preclude the mention of any other particulars, which abound in the old registers, and must ever be highly valuable from their miscellaneous character. It was a frequent custom to insert occurrences of a memorable or historical nature; and, as might be expected, highly curious as well as quaint are many of these entries. When, as sometimes happened, the parson was of a witty turn of mind, the entries almost verge on the ludicrous and grotesque; and again, from the occasional entries made in a few pithy words of Latin, the refined

and scholarly taste of the parson is shown. But it is not to be supposed that, in a succession of parsons, every one would be of the same turn of mind, and equally interested in furnishing material for the register. Thus, whereas one parson would take considerable pains to furnish items of information respecting passing events, another would be content to make the necessary entries without any such additions. And in some cases the parson even failed to make the requisite entries in his registers, or even to take care of those which were already made. A respect for antiquity, and for the value of history, is not innate in everybody; and hence many a register has either been carelessly kept or indifferently supplied with information. An absence of ordinary discretion on the part of the parson has occasionally endangered the parish register. Not many years ago, for instance, a literary man wrote to a country clergyman—to whom he was a stranger—asking if he would examine his parish register for a purpose connected with a remote date. A fortnight elapsed without any reply being received, and the student was beginning to despair, when, to his surprise, he received a parcel by rail, with a letter from the clergyman, who stated that he had forwarded the register 'for the personal examination of the inquirer, thinking he had better look himself for what he wanted.'

Turning to the registers themselves, many of those in London parishes—reaching back to a remote period—have been admirably kept, the entries being clear, and tolerably full in the first

instance, while the books themselves are splendidly preserved. The register of Marylebone is a most voluminous affair, and, like that of Limehouse, is a model of good order. Stepney, which has a register going back farther than Limehouse, is another commendable example, that of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields being equally good. Most of our City churches, too, have full and fair registers, the evil, we are told, of defective and badly kept registers being most noteworthy in our rural parishes. At the same time, despite innumerable mischances which have, at one time or another, befallen the parish registers, they represent a considerable amount of documentary evidence, not to be replaced, relating to the obscure past. Indeed, whilst invaluable as genealogical records in connection with the rights of property and the assumption of titles, they further afford us an insight into the social life of our forefathers not otherwise obtainable.

And, taking into account the value of the parish register, it is highly desirable, as it has been so often urged, that a law should be passed enforcing its future safe government in some public office, as exists in Scotland. When a system of registration was introduced into Scotland by the 17th and 18th Vict., c. 80, 'An Act to provide for the better Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in Scotland,' passed August 7, 1854, old parochial registers were ordered to be transmitted to the Registrar-General for preservation in the General Registry Office at Edinburgh.

Very many of the present registers, too, are

transcripts of the originals, which accounts for the same handwriting. The old parish register of Luddenham, near Faversham, for instance, consists of two volumes now bound together; the first entry running thus:

'*Luddenham.*—The register following is truly copyed out of the old Register Booke of Luddenham, and conferred together, nothing added or left out that concerneth the Record of Baptysings, buryalls, marriages or other thing pertaining to the Church or parish. By me, Peter Jackson, Clerke, Rect. Eccle. Lud., 1598.'

But this system of transcription gave rise to a ludicrous notion of clerical longevity. The parson signed the copies, and these sometimes extended over eighty or ninety years, during which time it has been gravely asserted the signer's life extended.

It should further be added that the appointment of a registrar has oftentimes been duly notified in the parish register, as in the case of the parish of Leyland, where we find this memorandum on the fly-leaf:

'These are to certifie all whom it may concerne that uppon ellection made by the Inhabitants of y^e^ P'rish of Leyland in the County of Lanc. uppon Thomas Walker of Leyland aforesaid Yeoman to bee Register for their said parish of Leyland accordinge to the Acte [of Parliament] of the 24th of August last past. I doe therefore allow of him the said Thomas Walker to be Register for the said parish and have according to the terme of the said Act administered the oath of a Register to

him and likewise delivered into the hands of the said Thomas Walker the old Register Book (belonging to the said Parish) bearing date from the 27th of Aprill 1538 to the 3rd of Aprill 1597. In testimony whereof I have hereunder written my hand the 22nd day of September 1653.

'(*Signed*) EDWARDE ROBINSOUN.'

It appears that Thomas Walker died on December 7, 1655, which explains the next memorandum:

'Whereas y^e^ above said Thomas Walker being deceased and y^e^ parish of Leyland being void of a Register y^e^ Inhabitants of y^e^ said parish or y^e^ major part of y^em^ have att a Gen'all Meeting by a Certificate under y^ere^ hands ellected and chosen Mr. William Rothwell yeir minister to bee Register of y^e^ parish aforesaid with a provisoe yat hee shall relinquish itt when y^e^ parish or y^e^ greater part yereof shall think fitt to conferr itt upon y^e^ Schoole[master]. These are therefore to certifie all whom it may concerne that y^e^ said Mr. Rothwell comeing before mee one of y^e^ Justices of Peace for y^e^ said Countie of Lanc^r^ and tendered ye said Certificate I have allowed of him to be Register for ye said parish and have tendered and given him ye oth of A Register according to an Act of Parliam^t^ of y^e^ 24th August 1653 in y^at^ case provided, and hath also deliv^d^ to the safe keepeing of y^e^ said Mr. Rothwell ye old Register above mentioned.

'Given under my hand att Buckshaw the 25th Januarie, 1656.'

So far the parson seems to have kept in favour with his parishioners, but according to the story given in Walker's 'Sufferings of the Clergy,' he had to endure much persecution and hardship between this date and that of the Restoration. Hence the further memorandum :

'Whereas Mr. Rothwell the late Register being displaced and y^e^ said parishioners of Leyland meeteing att the P'rish Church of Leyland upon the first day of May 1656 the major part then p^r^sent did ellecte and choose Robert Abbott of Leyland above-said yeoman to bee for the tyme p^r^sent Register for the said p'rish and to execute that office till the parish with y^e^ approbacōn of the next Justice of peace should thinke fitt to conferr y^e^ said office upon some other P'son. These are therefore to certifie all whom it may concerne that y^e^ said Robert Abbott comeing that day before mee one of the justices of y^e^ peace for y^e^ said Countie I have approved and allowed of him and hath administered ye oath of a Register to him accordinge to y^e^ Acte of Parliam^t^ in that case provided and also hath deliu'ed into his safe keeping the old Register Book menconed in the first Certificate on y^e^ other side. Given under my hand att Buckshaw y^e^ 2nd May 1656.

'Edward Robinsoun.'

But it will be seen in an ensuing chapter that Mr. Rothwell's case was far from being an isolated one, further instances having been given in other registers.



CHAPTER I.

PARISH LIFE.

THE parish life of one or two centuries ago was very different from what it is at the present day. Time has wrought many changes: old customs have passed away, railways have linked one village with another, and country life has gradually assimilated itself in tone and character with the practices and habits of neighbouring towns. As formerly, the rural parish is no longer an isolated little community; and hence it has thrown off, from year to year, those characteristics of habit and custom which once gave it an individuality of its own. But, happily, many of these traits of parish life have been preserved in local documents—such as the parochial register—which otherwise would have perished and been lost to posterity.

An interesting entry relating to the Poor Laws of Edward VI. and 5 Elizabeth occurs in the transcript of the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, for the year 1565, where, added to

the burial on March 6 of 'Israel Raynolds s. of James Raynolds',' this note is given: 'Sol. iiij*d.*'; and in the transcript of St. George's, Canterbury, under 1566, we find that the names of the collectors for the poor were Christopher Lewys and Thomas Kyng, and that they collected fourpence. 'It is hardly necessary,' writes Mr. Meadows Cowper,* 'to say that so long as the monasteries stood there was no need and no thought of a Poor Law; but when they were suppressed, the ugly fact stared men in the face that there were countless poor, and none to provide for them.' An attempt was made to meet the difficulty, and in the reign of Elizabeth an Act was passed 'touching relieving poor and impotent persons.' The Act runs thus: 'The poor and impotent persons of every parish shall be relieved of that which every person will of their charity give weekly: and the same relief shall be gathered in every parish by collectors assigned, and weekly distributed to the poor; for none of them shall openly go or sit begging. And if any parishioner shall obstinately refuse to pay reasonably toward the relief of the said poor, or shall discourage others; then the Justices of the Peace at the Quarter Sessions may tax him to a reasonable weekly sum; which, if he refuses to pay, they may commit him to prison.'

And, as Mr. Cowper adds, Christopher Lewys and Thomas Kyng were the 'collectors assigned,' and if the amount 'iiij*d.* represents the result of a year's collection, we need not be surprised that

* 'Registers of St. George's, Canterbury,' Introduction, v, vi.

other Poor Laws were soon required to prevent the people from dying of starvation.'

But the condition of many a country parish in the seventeenth century was lamentable owing to those days of contest and confusion. As one of the many instances of the wretched state of parish life at this period, a writer in the 'Sussex Archæological Collections' (iv. 259) mentions the condition of Wivelsfield. It appears 'the tithes, both great and small, belonged to a Mr. More, of Morehouse, whose predecessors had received them by grant from the Crown, on the dissolution of the Monastery of Lewes, previous to which the church had been supplied by a lay-reader, who sometimes on a holiday came over to read a homily. During the time of the Rebellion and the Protectorate, the parish, which before had been supplied by students provided by the family of Mr. More, had been filled successively by a Presbyterian jack-maker, a drummer, and a maltman.' A memorandum in Mayfield register, made by the parson, dated 1646, and signed by him, tells much the same tale:

'I being called upon to the Assembly of Divines, did offer to give up all the tithes due from the parishioners for the maintenance of a minister, but through the backwardness of many in not paying their dues, and it may be by the negligence of some in not being active to procure a fit man for the place, and to give him encouragement, there was no constant minister for some time, and afterwards divers changes, so that the register was neglected for divers years.'

Entries of this kind are of frequent occurrence, and show under what disadvantages parish life was passed. A memorandum in the register of Kibworth, Leicestershire, dated 1641, runs thus: 'Know all men that the reason why little or nothing is registered from this year 1641 until the year 1649, was the Civil Wars between Charles and his Parliament, which put all into a confusion till then; and neither minister nor people could quietly stay at home for one party or the other.' Indeed, taking into consideration the many difficulties at this period of our history that attended the keeping of the parish registers, it is surprising that they did not fare far worse in such a time of turmoil.

But turning from the political surroundings of parish life, it would seem that occasionally disputes, as at the present day, were the cause of much vexatious litigation; and whilst the parson was struggling with more or less success against the difficulties of his calling, much bitterness and ill-feeling were often caused by such unhappy dissensions. Thus, it appears that the old register of the parish of St. Olave, Chester, was lost in a suit between Hugh Harvey and the parishioners in the year 1666; and a memorandum carefully inserted in the parish register of Hillingdon, under the date of December 30, 1670, gives an interesting account of a lawsuit which arose as to what parish a certain house belonged. It runs thus:

'Elizabeth, the daughter of John Franklin and Grace his wife, at y^{e} house near Ikenham belong-

ing to this parish, by leave first derived, was christened there, which house in the time of my immediate Predecessor, Mr. Bourne, occasioned a very great suit between the two Towns, when at last after a great deal of money spent, it was adjudged to belong to Hillingdon, and so hath been adjudged ever since, without dispute; and to prevent any for time to come, this memoriall is now registered.'

Four years later we find another entry—this time relating to a burial difficulty—between the same two parishes: 'Jan^ry 18th, 1674. The wife of — Beddifont marr at Ikenham and there, by leave first obtained, buried; and not by any just right to burie there, as formerly pretended, till it was determined by law after a costly and tedious suit betwixt the two Townes. Salvo itaque in omnibus jure exit sus* Hillingdoniensis.' In many cases it would seem that boundary parish lines were ill-defined, which gave rise to much dispute; and, as in the case just quoted, there was oftentimes in a parish an unwritten law, the real existence of which, when questioned by some captious or aggrieved parishioner, involved an expensive lawsuit.

In the Crosby-on-Eden registers there is a quaint entry which tells its own tale, and from which it would seem that the parishioners of Crosby desired to place on record their triumph over their neighbours of Brampton:

'Whereas the Churchwardens and Overseers of ye Poor for ye p^ish of Crosby ypon Eden made

* Probably the tithe pig.

their complaint to the worshipful John Aglionby and Richard Goodman Esq^rs^ two of her Maj^ties^ Justices of the Peace for this County whereof one of ye corum (*sic*) That Ales Pickson wife of Thomas Pickson came lately to live in the said p^ish^ of Crosby not having gained a legale settlement there according to the Laws in that case made and provided nor produced a certificate to them owning her to be settled elsewhere And that the said M^rs^ Pickson is likely to become chargeable to y^e^ said p^ish^ of Crosby whereupon examination thereof they the said Justices did adjudge the same to be true and the last place of her settlement was in Brampton p^ish^ in this County They y^e^ said Justices by warrant unto their hands and seals dated the third day of April Anno Dom 1714 did require the said Churchwardens of the p^ish^ of Crosby to convey the said Ales Pickson from Crosby to the said p^ish^ of Brampton thereby also requiring the Churchwardens and Overseers of ye p^ish^ of Brampton to receive her as an inhabitant there by virtue of which Order the said Churchwardens and Overseers of Crosby did convey the said Ales Pickson to y^e^ Churchwardens of Brampton aforesaid and the said Churchwardens of Brampton thinking themselves grievously oppressed by the said Order appealed to this Quarter Sessions from the said Order whereupon reading the said Order and upon hearing Counsel on the side of the Churchwardens of Crosby and noo defence being made by the Churchwardens of Brampton notwithstanding due notice given to them this Court doth adjudge the

Order soo made by the said Justices to be confirmed and it is hereby confirmed. Dated the day and year aforesaid.'

Any infringement of parish rights seems to have been most obstinately resented, and the following interesting minute of a meeting—specially convened to consider what steps should be taken to uphold certain privileges belonging to the parish—is written upon a flyleaf at the commencement of one of the registers of SS. Peter and Paul, Mitcham :

'It is this day agreed upon by the Inhabitants above named in the behalfe of the rest of the Inhabitants that the common fields shall be layd open so soon as all the corne of the said fields shall be carried out. And then and not before it shall be lawfull for the said Inhabitants that have been accustomed and to have benefitt of the common of the said field to put in their cattle until St. Luke Day following, and not after any sheepe or other cattle to be suffered there, but if any be taken they are to be put in the pound or to be trespassers upon paine for every horse sixpence, every cowe four pence, and every hogg threepence, and every sheepe one penny, and for every horse cowe hogg or sheepe that shall be taken in the same field after our Lady Day to double the said penalty, the benefitt of the said Pennelty to goe to the field-keeper.

'And likewise it is agreed upon by the said Inhabitants that all those who have inclosed any part of the common ffields shall take away their gates that their severall inclosures may be cōmon

to the fields, and this is agreed and concluded upon before us whose names are here underwritten, being required of the Lords of his Majes^ts^ most honb^le^ Privie Counsell to examine the complaints of the cottagers in the said parish touching the said inclosure of the com̄on ffields, and whereunto we have thought fitt to consent unto as that which we conceive to be right and reasonable—dated at Mitcham this 14th day of Decemb^r^ 1637.'*

But things have altered in the interval, for now the railway divides the common fields into two parts, being now mostly built over.

Another memorandum of a similar kind is entered in the register of Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire, under the year 1635, respecting some land bequeathed to the town, which is to the following effect: 'Concerning the lands called Ciprious lands given to the towne of Wittlesford, we doe think it fitte that the profits coming of these lands shall not hereafter be employed towards the payment of the taske, nor any of the King's carriage, but for the com'on town charges where most neede shall be. And according to the meaninge of the same gifte it is thus agreed upon at Linton, at a meetinge the ix^th^ of June 1625, before Henry Smith, Doctor in Divinity, and Michael Dalton Esq^re^, two of his Maj^ties^ Justices of the Peace for this Countie to whom this matter was referred by my lorde Cheife Justice, and to the end that there might be from henceforth a finale quiett between the said Inhabitants, we think it fitting, & it is our order that this Order and

* See the *Reliquary*, vol. xviii., pp. 11, 12.

agreement be entered into the Church booke and the towne booke. And in them bothe by all the present feoffees and other the cheife Inhabitants subscribed under every one of their hands. Dated this 10th June, 1625.'

Many memoranda of this kind occur in the parish registers, and they are interesting as showing that our forefathers were equally jealous of what they considered their public rights, and were at all times ready to resist any arbitrary or unjust curtailment of them—an uncompromising attitude which even the parson himself was prepared to maintain, as may be gathered from an entry made in the register of Little Abington, where 'the rights of the Vicaridge' are very minutely recorded, a Mr. Colbatch, who compiled the article, making this conclusion: 'Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark.'

But it was not the right of property only which occasionally gave rise to a parish broil, for the administration of the poor-law seems at times to have exercised the mind of the rural parishioner. In the year 1674, it appears from an entry that there was paid at Eastbourne to a certain 'J. Russell, for keeping Mary Peeper, two weeks and three days, six shillings; to Goody Russell, for laying her out, one shilling; disbursed for bread and beer at her funeral, two shillings and twopence.' These items when published created a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction, and soon afterwards the parishioners held a meeting in the vestry, and 'declared that great abuses in the administration of the poor-law had taken place,' and as a mark

of their displeasure a resolution was passed that all recipients of relief should wear a badge upon the right side of their upper garment, and if the overseer relieved any other than these, no allowance was to be made to him for their account.* That this was not an isolated case is evident from a memorandum in Wadhurst register, dated 1630, relating to the misappropriation of certain funds specially intended for the poor:

'Whereas Mr. Thomas Whitefield, of Worth, in the County of Surrey, Esquire, being well affected to the parish of Wadhurst, gave, besides the three almshouses and twelve cordes of woode, ten poundes by the yeare, the said ten pounds was, in 1633, employed to the payment of the general sesse of the poor, whereby the said money given to be disposed to the maintenance of the poor was diverted from the right ends, and served to abate the charge of the rich assessed in the said sesse. Whereupon John Hatley, Vicar of Wadhurst, then one of the feoffees, opposed this Act as ungodly as unjust; and the writings being showed whereby the ten pounds annuity was conveyghed, it was found that the said ten pounds was by them to be disposed to the extended use of the poor, and not to serve to the abatement of the charge of the rich. This the above-named John Hatley thought fit to set down here, forasmuch as he suffered many foule words for opposing this wrong; and lest any ill-disposed person should attempt to do it hereafter, or any man not knowing the purport of the conveighance should ignorantly fall into the ruine of sacrilege.'

* 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., p. 267.

And in the register of St. Mary-le-Bow, Durham, an entry informs us that 'Baron Hilton's money was by Richard Baddely and John Simpson churchwardens for the years 1676-1677 recovered for the poor of this parish, six pound per annum which was wrongfully detained from the said poor by the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Durham, and charged eight shillings they drunke in blew clarett to the poores accompt.' Boughton register, again, contains the particulars of the recovery, in the year 1606, of the Town Land, which it seems had for the space of sixty years been wrongfully taken from the parish; and a memorandum in the register of Hartlepool, Durham, says that 'the Collectors for the Royal Aid Sess in the year 1697 cheated most abominably the Town of Hartinpoole, gathering the value of it where it was not due.'

Amongst other financial matters connected with parish life, it may be noted that one of the statutes of Elizabeth provided that 'all parishes within the Realm of England and Wales shall be charged to pay weeklie such sume of money towardes the reliefe of sicke, hurte, and maimed souldiers and mariners soe as no Parish be rated above the sume of tenpence, nor under the sume of twopence weeklie to be paide.' Accordingly, under the date December, 1598, particulars are given in Prestbury register respecting 'a laye for the poore and maymed soldyers within the sayd parrishe as it was augmented by y^r^ or week in december 1598.' This Act was confirmed by a decree of the Commonwealth, passed May 28, 1647, but the amount

collected under its provisions being found inadequate—owing to the long continuance of the war and the consequent increase in the number of applicants for relief—an increased rate, not to exceed 2s. 6d. per week from each parish, was sanctioned by Parliament August 10, 1647.*

In some parishes it was customary for those who retained any particular seat in church to pay so much a year for the benefit of the poor in return for the privilege. In the register of Wragby, Yorkshire, there is a memorandum of an agreement made by Sir Thomas Gargrave, Knight, the curate, and churchwardens, in the year 1573, with the consent of the parish of Wragbie, whereby 'Cudbart Flemynge, of Sharleston, gentleman, shall have to him and his successors, a place in the north side of the Church of Wragbie, whereas scole was and at this present is accustomed (to be) kept, so long as he or they doe paye, or cause to be payd, yearlie to the poor of Wragbie, or into the hand of the Collectors, or Churchwardens for the time appoynted, twelvepence, the yere, ther upon the holie dayes to sytt without any interruption of any person in office or out of office.' But such arrangements in after-years often led to the most unseemly disturbances, and the abuses which were the outcome of the old pew system have justly been made the subject of censure and ridicule in the literature of the past.†

It was also permitted in olden times for persons

* Prestbury Registers, Record Society, 1881, p. xv.

† See *Yorkshire Archæological and Topographical Journal*, part xlvii., p. 311.

in distress, or who had met with accident or misfortune, and required the assistance in a pecuniary shape of their richer brethren, to obtain from the Ecclesiastical Court what was popularly termed 'a brief,' or, in other words, a species of authority to go about begging at any parish church they might think fit, and thereupon to throw themselves upon the bounty of indiscriminate congregations, even at a remote distance. The year 1619 seems to have been remarkable or the number of persons applying for relief with briefs, or letters patent. They were issued out of Chancery on petition, the patent charges and other costs attending them being very large—a circumstance, it has been suggested, sufficient to account for their frequency, as they would be thus profitable to the royal exchequer and the Chancery officials. In Burn's 'Ecclesiastical Law' an example is given, showing the various charges, the summary being as follows :

	£	*s.*	*d.*
Collected on £9, 986 briefs (*i.e.*, copies sent to various parishes, etc.) - -	614	12	9
Charges - - - - - - - -	330	16	6
	283	16	3

Entries illustrative of this custom are very numerous, and occasionally are amusing. Thus, in Kingston Register, under February 24, 1571, this memorandum occurs: 'Sonday was here two women, the mother and daughter out of Ireland, she called Elynor Salve to gather upon the deathe of her howsbande a gentleman slayne amongst

the Wylde Iryshe being Captaine of Gallyglasses, and gathered xviij^{tl}'; and on August 20, 'there were here two men being robbed on the sea.' Loughborough register notices a 'brief for rebuilding the Theatre Royal in London,' and under July 26, 1690, a memorandum in the register of Springthorpe, Lincolnshire, records that there was 'collected for Teignmouth, for loss by the French landing, firing, and plundering the said town, two shillings and tenpence.' These briefs undoubtedly prove the readiness of our forefathers to give alms, even for objects which had no local interest. In the year 1874 the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire published extracts from the registers of Ormskirk Church, extending from the year 1676 to the year 1719 inclusive, and one brief noticed was for a very distant object: '9^{ber} 12th 1700. Collected then in y^{e} Parish of Ormes^{ke} for y^{e} poor slaves in Sally eight pounds three shillings sixpence.' Sally [Sallee] was on the west coast of Morocco, formerly a stronghold of piracy. And to give one or two further illustrations, we may quote the following:

'1633. For Strasburg in Alsatia, in Germany, 1s. 6d.

'1681. For the French Protestants, £1 18s. 6d.

'1700. For the redemption of Captives in Fez and Morocco.'—Woodstock.

'1661. For 100 Protestant Churches in the Dukedome of Lithuania, 4s.'—Cheadle.

These briefs are usually written on the fly-leaves of the registers, the parishes where they occurred being as numerous as the subjects are varied.

Sometimes it appears the collections were made at the visitations, and occasionally they were paid in the rates. The practice in course of time, however, became an abuse, and Pepys under June 30, 1661, makes this entry in his diary: 'Sunday. To Church, where we observe the trade of briefs is come now up to so constant a course every Sunday, that we resolve to give no more to them.' In the year 1705 an Act of Parliament was passed 'for the better collecting charity money on briefs, preventing abuses in relation thereto,' and finally, in the year 1828, another Act was passed forbidding the reading of briefs in churches.* The most eventful period in the history of briefs was when the Civil War broke out, the House of Commons having taken 'precautions against the royal prerogative being exercised in issuing briefs to raise money for the supply of the King's wants, or for the relief of sufferers in the royal cause'; and on January 31, 1643, Henry Martin —afterwards known as the regicide—brought in an order for inhibiting any collections upon any brief under the Great Seal. A further order was made on January 10, 1648, that no collections should be made on briefs, except such as were issued under the Great Seal, under direction of both Houses of Parliament.†

Turning to other payments, we find bound up with the Prestbury register various memoranda relating to the affairs of the parish, the first of

* For the origin of briefs, see Staveley's 'History of Churches,' 1712, pp. 99-101.

† 'Parish Registers,' R. E. Chester Waters, p. 79.

which relates to a custom that had existed from time immemorial with respect to payments for 'the use and reparacon of the Church of Prestburie,' and which, as far as can be gathered, appears to have been peculiar to the parish—a ley or assessment, resembling in some respects the ordinary church rate, but locally known as serage or cerage silver, the survival, it has been suggested, of the 'wax-money,' allowed to the Vicar by the Abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, in accordance with an agreement made at about the end of the thirteenth, or beginning of the fourteenth century. After reciting 'the duties and laudable customs, as of long tyme have been due and accustomed to be paid,' the order sets forth the apportionment for each township liable, with the names of those persons who 'subscrybed did agree and consent' thereto, as well for themselves as the rest of the parish.*

The next entry is a copy of a very interesting kind, of 'an old Order taken and of long time used by the consent of the whole parish of Prestburie, for the dividing and the better repayringe or mayntenhinge of the Churchyard.' It seems that the residents of each township had been granted a certain portion of the ground in the churchyard, which they undertook to keep fenced, and in order, reserved for their exclusive use—a practice by no means unusual. Contracts, again, for keeping the church in repair are not unfrequently recorded in the registers, and an old one, dated 1578,

* 'The Register of Prestbury,' edited by James Croston, Record Society, 1881 : Introduction, p. xiv.

is given in the Wragby register, which is a good illustration of agreements of this kind:

'It was agreed, upon the xvith of [No]vemb anno 1578 betwixt the Churchwardens and the rest of the parish of Wragbie, and Thomas Milner of Wragbie aforesaid, that he, the said Thomas Milner shall from the xvith day of November of his own costes and charges, maintaine, uphould, and keepe, all the bells within the Churche of Wragbie with hempe, lether, and greas, with all their furniture belonginge to the said bells, as often as need shall require; brass and iron, and wood, for yockes and wheles excepted, whitche is to be found of the charges of the Parish. And the same belle (?) to be so repaired by the said Thomas Milner, as is aforesaid, during the term and space xx^{ti} yeare, yff he the said Thomas Milner do live so long, and continew within the parish of Wragbie, the Churchwardens for the time being painge unto the said Thomas Milner vj*s.* vij*d.* everye yeare, that is to say iij*s.* iij*d.* at Mychelmes, and iij*s.* iij*d.* at the Nunchation of the blessed Virgin Mary by even portions.'

Indeed, it seems to have been a popular and long-standing notion that the fact of any kind of parish agreement being copied into the register made it all the more binding on the parties concerned, but the chief reason for this practice was, that, if by any accident in after-years a contract should be either mislaid or lost, a copy of it could be seen in the register of the parish. By its being entered, too, in the register, any business transaction had thereby a public im-

portance imparted to it, which made it all the more binding. Thus, we find the Vicar of Aldingbourne, Sussex, making a note in his register of the fees for which he was not liable: 'The Vicarage of Aldingborne is not to pay any procurations to the Archdeacon; neither was the glebe lands or the tythes belonging to the Vicarage ever taxed, within the memory of man, to any payments saving in the year 1635, six shillings and eightpence to the shipping.'

Agreements of this kind were by no means uncommon, but occasionally they gave rise to future litigation. At the conclusion of the old register-book of Kirk-Leatham is an instance of the valuable efforts and mediation of the Vicar, the compact agreed upon long remaining in force:

'Primo die May, Anno Dm̄ni 1622.

'*Memorandum.*—At the direction of Robert Weemse, then Vicar of Kirkleatham, for the good of the whole parish, I, Nicholas Kildale, have inserted this order hereafter following, to remain *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*. For after a long suit and controversy, which was between Kirkleatham and Wilton, in the Spirituall Court at York, the matter by the men of Wilton, Lackenby, and Laisenby, was drawne into the Court of Wards in y^e^ minority of Phrediric Cornewallis. And was brought againe from the said Court of Wards by ye meanes of y^e^ said Robert Weemse; and at last, by y^e^ mutuall consent and assent of the whole parish, as well of Kirkleatham as Wilton, was finally ordered as hereinafter is specifyed, which

order was recorded by the said Robert Weemse, in y^e^ said Court of Wards, in Michaelmas term next after y^e^ said order was made.'

The order agreed upon was as follows:

'It is this day agreed by and between y^e^ inhabitants of Kirkleatham *cum membris*, y^t^ inhabitants of Wilton *cum membris*, shall hereafter from time to time, at their own costs and expenses, build, repaire, and uphold, and keep in reparations, the north side of y^e^ Church and steeple of Kirkleatham, from the middle northward, with stone, lyme, glasse, iron, timber, and lead; and in consideration thereof, hereafter be exempted from whiting or painting of y^e^ wals on y^e^ inside, and from paueing the ground, and building the stalls w^t^in ye said Church, and shall hereafter be freed from all other charges for or about y^e^ repaire of all bels, bookes, or any other ornaments belonging unto y^e^ said Church of Kirkleatham.'

But in the year 1651 the inhabitants of Wilton refused their portion of the expenses ordered by this agreement, and when the 'parishioners of Kirkleatham did petition ye worshipfull justices of peace in an open sessions for relief, it was decreed that "the inhabitants of Wilton should either repair their part of the said church, or show cause to the contrary by appearing before ye justices of ye peace of this North Riding."' They adopted the latter course, but were ordered to fulfil their part of the agreement as heretofore.

Not infrequently, too, memoranda of agreements made with workmen are entered in the parish

register, concerning sundry repairs arranged for in the course of the year. In one of the registers of Aldbrough, Yorkshire, there is a memorandum as early as the time of James I., which shows that organs were then in use in this church :

'Mem^d^ that the xxi^st^ day of August, Anno Dom. 1617, it was agreed between the Churchwardens and Inhabitants of the p^ishe^ of Aldbroughe on theire p^ts^ and George Brownlace of the Cittye of Yorke, that the said George Brownlace should mend and repayre the organs at Aldbroughe, fro' time to time, when and as often as shall require. And shall have for his paynes 6*s.* yearely upon May daye, and also be p'vided of a horse att the chardge of the pishe fro' Yorke and home againe. And also be furnished att the chardge of the p^ishe^ with all things needfull for the mendinge and repayre of them, as also w^th^ meate, drinke, and lodging during the work.'

And a Vicar of Bitteswell, Leicestershire, entered in his register a 'Table of Customes' for the benefit of future parsons and their parishioners, of which we subjoin an extract :

'A Transcription of Customes for all tythings due to the Vicar of Bitteswell, rates and others, as have been recorded by Mr. Edw. Duckminton who was Vicar of the said parish about the year 1630 By me Geo Castell, present Vicar 1665.

'Imprim. Pro domo $2\frac{1}{2}$—that is for the house 1^d^, for the hearth 1^d^, and for the garden $\frac{1}{2}$ to be paid at Easter. For man and wife, offerings 2^d^, for servants and children $1\frac{1}{4}$ at Easter,' etc.

At the commencement of the Orton register,

Westmoreland, are given the fourteen names of 'the sworne men of Orto' anno d'ni 1596,' after which this memorandum is added, another interesting relic of parish life in olden times :

'*Inprimis* that thes be diligent and careful to see and provide that the people be . . . and behave the'selves honestlie . . . feare of God according to the Holie Word of God and the Good and wholesome laws of this land. *Secondlie* to see that the Churchwardens be careful and diligent in executinge their office ioyne with thes in suppressinge of sinne and such as behave the'selves inordinatlie to reprove and rebuke those wh be found offenders, and if they will not amend to p^e^sent the' to be punished. *Thirdlie* —to se that the Church and Churchy^d^ be decentlie repaired and mainteyned. Also we as agreed y^t^ everie p'sonnis beinge found faultie by the Churchwardens and p'sented to the sworn me' shall paie xij*d.* to the poor ma's box. And that whosoever doth not come p'sent the'selves lawfull warning being given either of the xij or Churchwardens to the place appointed shall loose xi(j) to the poore ma's box without a sufficient cause to the contrarie whereof thes are to certifie the rest assembled at . . . appointed of their meetinge. Lastly that the Churchwardes . . . and take the sam forfat . . . p'sent the offenders.'

The clause following the third admonition is a little obscure, but the meaning, it has been suggested, is this: 'If any person be deemed by the churchwardens to be guilty of disorderly or immoral conduct he shall be presented to the court

of the twelve sworn men—the list given comprises fourteen names; perhaps the two churchwardens were included — who shall, if the accused is unable to clear himself, thereupon inflict a fine of twelve pence payable to the poor-box, and that if he fails to attend and answer to the complaint, being duly summoned either by the twelve or the churchwardens, or fails to send sufficient excuse for absence, the same fine shall be imposed.'*

It appears to have been customary in some parishes to make once a year a list of the inhabitants of the parish. Such a practice was observed in the parish of St. Mary Aldermary, with additional particulars as to their occupation, religious faith, and the numbers of their respective families. Two such lists, for the years 1733 and 1734, were transcribed in the parish register, and these are interesting as illustrating the register itself, and as furnishing details which do not appear elsewhere.†

* See Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archæological Society, 1891, vol. xi., pp. 252, 253.

† These lists have been reproduced by Dr. J. L. Chester in his reprint of 'The Parish Registers of St. Mary Aldermary,' 1880, pp. 235 and 238.



CHAPTER II.

PARSON AND PEOPLE.

THE relations of the parson with his parishioners, unhappily, have not always been of the most friendly kind—a circumstance, it would seem, in some cases owing to his having been appointed in direct opposition to the wishes of the people. The register of Staplehurst gives an account of a certain Rector who was appointed in this manner:

'Henricus Kent, Cantab et Socius Collegii Reg^lis^ rector ecclesiæ parochialis de Staplehurst, institutus sexto die novembris, 1645, et ejusdem anni decimo septimo die Nov^ris^ inductus. Hujusdem Ecclesiæ possessionem non sine multorum oppositionibus accepit, sed non-ullorum suffragiis electus, et suo jure legali sustentatus, per ordinens parliamenti specialem liberam tandem prædicandi potestatem habuit. O tempora! O mores!'

But Henry Kent lived long enough to gain not only the affections of his parishioners, but even the goodwill of his opponents. In the register of

East Lavant, some particulars are given respecting another parson who, too, was regarded as an intruder. The entry runs thus: '29th Oct., 1653. Richard Batsworth was approved of, and sworn to be a parish minister for the sayd parish, according to an Act of Parliament in the case made and provided.' It is further added that 'he was a man of low stature, very violent for the rebels, and a plunderer of the royalists, particularly of the Morley family. He had some learning, a great deal of chicanery, though seldom more than one coat, which for some time he wore the wrong side out,—its right side was seen only on Sundays —till it was almost worn out, and then he had a new one, which he used in the same manner.'

On November 15, 1649, it appears that Mr. Nalton was chosen 'by very full and general consent to be minister of St. Martin's, Ludgate Hill, but he did not accept the appointment, whereupon it was decided to offer it to Mr. Warran, minister of Hendon.' Above this statement in the register are written these not very complimentary lines:

> 'Twas Jeroboam's practice and his sport
> Priests to elect out of the baser sort.'

Another curious memorandum in the register of Everley, Wilts, dated September 29, 1660, describes the appointment of one William Eastman, commonly called Tinker, by occupation a brass founder, and his expulsion, on the restoration of Charles II., and concludes with these amusing lines:

> 'Exit Tinker, let all men henceforth know
> A thorn was planted where a vine should grow;

Down went St. Paul, Apollos and Cephas,
For silver trumpets here was sounding brass.'

In the year 1642, we find from the Knaresborough register that on July 5 'Roger Atey was peaceably inducted into the Vicaridge of Knaresborough by the presentation of Sir Henry Slingsby, Anno Ætat° 45°.' This reads as if in those troublous times some opposition might have been expected. Later on the induction of Leonard Ash is mentioned in these terms:

'Leonard Ash Vic. inductus fuit vicessimo sexto die Augusti Anno Domini 1692. Wee whᵒˢᵉ names are under written did heare Leonard Ash Viccar of Knaresborough, after his reading divine service in the said parish church upon the eleventh day of September 1692, reade the thirty nine Articles in the aforesaid parish Church and declare his ful and free assent to the same.'

In many cases, when the parochial clergy recovered possession of the registers at the Restoration, one of their first acts was to insert an entry expressive of their contempt for the intruding ministers, who had superseded them during the Protectorate.

Occasionally the censure passed on the parson for any delinquency on his part has been duly recorded in the parish register. Thus, the Vicar of Godalming seems to have got into trouble for the partial non-fulfilment of his duties. The register of Godalming is signed at the foot of each page, from March, 1636, until 1642, by 'Nico. Andrewes, Vic. de Godalmyn,' but against him articles of complaint were presented to

Parliament by certain of his parishioners, from which it would seem that a limitation in the supply of sermons was the main charge. The charge, apparently, was considered satisfactorily proved against him, for his living was sequestered by order of Government, and he was imprisoned, and died, it is said, from the effects of the cruel treatment to which he was subjected.*

Indeed, it would appear from a further memorandum of this kind, dated 1615, that the parishioners of olden times were far more appreciative of sermons than nowadays. To quote another case: at Pickering, in Yorkshire, a complaint was made 'by the inhabitants of the Parish and Town of Pickering, in the County of York, that the parsonage, now in possession of the Bishop of Bristol, Dean of York—it being an endowment of the said Deanery—such slender care hath been had by him for the preaching of the Gospel unto the said parishioners, and giving them that Christian-like and necessary instruction which is fitting, as for a long time they scarce had any sermon at all amongst them. Whereupon their Lordships were pleased to direct their letters unto the said Lord Bishop, admonishing and requiring him to give speedy order for the redress of so great an inconvenience, and so scandalous to his Majesty's most Christian government.† But receiving answer from his Lordship, that in respect

* See 'Surrey Archæological Collections,' vol. ii., p. 210; vol. iv., p. 206.

† *Yorkshire Archæological and Topographical Journal*, vol. vii., pp. 287, 288.

of the said parsonage, being an impropriation, it is endowed with a Vicarage, and a Vicar presented thereunto, he held himself freed in law from any further charge, and that the said parsonage was in lease with such other-like excuses, but that notwithstanding he was contented to procure them twelve sermons every year; their Lordships thought fitting this day to call him to the board,' and they then reminded him that, 'beside the great obligations they had as Christians, it behoved them to press his Lordship, notwithstanding the former excuses, to have yet a further care of the teaching so great a multitude—there being 4,000 people—considering how busy the priests and jesuits are in these days, especially in these parts, not only labouring to corrupt his Majesty's subjects in their religion, but also infecting them with such damnable positions and doctrine touching their allegiance unto his Majesty's sacred person.

'Whereupon the said Bishop made offer unto the board that he would withdraw the Vicar there now present, and send in his room some learned and religious pastor who should, as it was desired, weekly preach unto the people, and carefully instruct them in points of faith and religion, of which their Lordships were pleased to accept for the present, and accordingly enjoined him to the performance thereof, and withal ordered that the said preacher now to be presented, should first be approved and allowed by the Lord Archbishop of York in respect of ability and sufficiency.'

In the register of Sandwich, under February 4,

1646-47, is entered the burial of Mr. Samuel Prichard, minister and preacher of God's Word; 'and it appears from the books of the Corporation that in the year 1611 the Corporation allowed thirty pounds to Mr. Richard Marston, preacher of God's Word, to be entertained to preach a weekly lecture in the town'; and in the year 1614 the same sum was allowed 'for a like service to Mr. Geere, Master of Arts.'

On the other hand, sometimes we find a parson over-anxious not to give offence to his parishioners. A memorandum at the end of the register of Newdigate Church, Surrey, made in the year 1634, by a cautious Rector, to prevent any rights being compromised by his admitting a parishioner to receive the Holy Sacrament in his church at Easter, is worthy of mention: 'An. Dom. 1634. Mart 12. Be it known to all men by these presents that I John Butcher dwellinge in a certain tenement of which question hath been made many yeeres whether it lie in Charlewood or Newdigate, and is not yet decided, upon grant and leave given me and to my friends . . . and to receye ye Sacrament at Easter next for this one time at ye parish Church of Newdigate y^t^ y^e^ same may not be prejudicial to y^e^ parish of Newdigate for y^e^ time to come, and do confesse that I have y^e^ said libertie for this time by leave. And in witness hereof I have hereunto set mine hand y^e^ day and yeere above written.'

Then follows another note in continuation, signed and attested as before: 'Also ye said Ch^r^ Butcher desired leave for himselfe and family

to come to y^e^ Sacrament at Whitsontide, 1636.' It may be added, there is a similar memorandum to prevent the parish from being compromised or prejudiced by leave given for the next two Communions from April 16, 1641, the rubrical minimum of three per annum being probably borne in mind.*

In the Bispham register for October, 1670, is the following memorandum, which throws some further light on the way in which the books were then kept: 'The Almanacke for the yeare is lost, but if I find it at any time hereafter the persons therein mentioned shall be registered on the left hand as truly as any others. Therefore Reader I humbly begg your excuse wishing noe greater crosse nor losse may eu^r^ fall to you or yours.' It may be presumed that the 'Almanacke' was not found, as the only entry on the left-hand page in the year 1671 is the baptism of Robert Wayte, minister of Bispham.†

That the parson did not always have an easy time with his parishioners—oftentimes the most unseemly broils and disturbances upsetting the parish—is abundantly proved in our old parochial documents. From Hayes register, for instance, we learn something of the extraordinary doings of a parish only twelve miles from London, so recently as during the years 1748 to 1754; the state of riot and disorder there disclosed seems to have almost driven the poor Rector wild. These are some of the notices of what happened:

* See 'Surrey Archæological Collections,' vol. vi., p. 269.

† See H. Fishwick's 'History of Bispham,' Chetham Society, 1887, p. 70.

'Feb. 11, 1749. The Company of Singers, by the consent of the Ordinary, were forbidden to sing any more by the Minister, upon account of their frequent ill-behaviour in the Chancel, and their ordering the Carpenter to pull down part of the Belfry without leave from the Minister and Churchwardens.'

On another day, March 18: 'The Clerk gave out the 100th Psalm, and the singers immediately opposed him, and sung the 15th, and bred a disturbance. The Clerk then ceased.' And under 1752 it is entered: 'Robert Johnson buried, and a sermon preached to a noisy congregation.' But these were not the only cases of insubordination which disturbed the Rector's mind; for on one occasion, when the Acton ringers came over, the churchwarden ordered the belfry door to be broken open for them to ring, 'contrary to the Canon and leave of the minister.' The parish, in truth, seems to have grown more unruly as time went on; for one day 'the ringers and other inhabitants disturbed the service from the beginning of prayers to the end of the sermon, by ringing the bells, and going into the gallery to spit below'; and at another time 'a fellow came into Church with a pot of beer and a pipe,' and remained 'smoking in his own pew until the end of the sermon.'*

But however unfortunate the Rector of Hayes may have been in being subjected to such scandals, there were equally obstreperous individuals in

* See 'Parish Registers in the Uxbridge Deanery': the *Antiquary*, vol. xviii., p. 65.

other parishes. Thus, in Middleham register we find this strange entry:

'Burials.—October 29th 1792—I enter under the head of burials, as spiritually dead, the names of John Sadler, Clerk to Mr. John Breare, Attorney-at-law, of this place, and Christopher Felton, Clerk to Mr. Luke Yarker, Attorney-at-law, of this place: first, for irrelevant behaviour a second time after public reproof on a former occasion of the same sort; and secondly, when mildly admonished by me not to repeat the same, they both made use of the most scandalous and insolent words concerning myself, for which I thought proper to pass a public censure upon them after sermon—though they were wilfully absent—in the face of the congregation, and enter the mention of the same in this book, that the names of those insolent young men may go down to posterity as void of all reverence to God and his ministers.'

And under February 12, $160\frac{8}{9}$, it is entered in the Greystoke registers:

'This daye two Sermons by Mr. p'son one affore none and the other after none and Edward Dawson taylyor did openlye confffess before the Congregation that he had abused the mynister Sr Matthew Gibson upon the Saboth daye at Eavening prayer.'

Cases of this kind were far from uncommon, and the Rector of Scotter, Lincolnshire, has chronicled this note in his register:

'1667-8. Jan. 19. mem. That on Septuagesima Sunday one Francis Drury, an excommunicate

person, came into the Church in time of divine service in y^e^ morning, and being admonisht by me to be gon, hee obstinately refused, whereupon y^e^ whole congregation departed ; and after the same manner in the afternoon the same day he came againe, and refusing to againe go out, the whole congregation again went home, so y^t^ little or noe service performed that day. I prevented his further coming in y^t^ manner, as he threatened, by order from the justice upon the Statute of Queen Elizabeth concerning the molestation and disturbance of public preachers—O tempora! O mores!'

Another parson seems to have been much disquieted in his mind on account of the laxity of the parish clerk in keeping the register, and was afraid blame might one day be given to him by his parishioners. Hence the Vicar of Carshalton thought it his duty to make the following memorandum in his register, dated March 10, 1651, which has the merit of originality :

'Good Reader tread gently :

'For though these vacant yeares may seeme to make me guilty of thy censure, neither will I simply excuse myselfe from all blemishe ; yet if thou doe but cast thine eye upon the former pages and see with what care I have kept the Annalls of mine owne tyme, and rectifyed sundry errors of former times, thou wilt begin to think ther is some reason why he that began to build so well should not be able to make an ende.

'The truth is that besyde the miserys and distractions of those ptermitted years which it may be God in his owne wysedome would not

suffer to be kept uppon record, the special ground of that ptermission ought to be imputed to Richard Finch, the p'ishe Clerke, whose office it was by long pscrition to gather the ephemeris, or dyary by the dayly passages, and to exhibit them once a yeare to be transcribed into this registry; and though I often called upon him agayne and agayne to remember his chadge, and he always told me that he had the accompts lying by him, yet at last p'ceaving his excuses, and revolving upon suspicion of his words to put him home to a full tryall I found to my great griefe that all his accompts was written in sand, and his words cōmitted to the empty winds. God is witness to the truth of this apologie, and that I made it knowne at some parish meetings before his own face, who could not deny it, neither do I write it to blemishe him, but to cleere my own integrity as far as I may, and to give accompt of this miscarryage to after ages by the subscription of my hand.'

But, it may be added, the country parsons had often cause to complain of the indiscretions of their parish clerks, whose conduct at times was far from what it should be. Thus, in a small work entitled 'The Exaction and Imposition of Parish Fees Discovered,' by Francis Sadler (1738), it is recorded how 'one Phillips, Clerk to Lambeth Parish, ran away with the register book, whereby the parish became great sufferers; and in such a case no person that is fifty years old, and born in the parish, can have a transcript of the Register to prove themselves heir to an estate.' And Burn

tells of a search that was once made at Rochester by a person who used every means to rid himself of the clerk's presence, but finding that he could not be left alone, he offered him a sum of money to assist him in the alteration of an entry which he pointed out.

But the parish clerk was not always the culprit, for the entries in the register of Norborough are wanting from the year 1665 to 1670, and after December 18, 1670, is the following memorandum made in the register, which has an historical interest:

'The reason of this defect in the register was because one Mr. John Cleypole, a factious gentleman, then living in the parish of Northborough, caused the register to be taken from mee, John Stoughton, then Rector, for which I was by the Ecclesiastical Court then holden at St. Martin's adjudged for satisfaction the sum of £2 10s., which was paid me at the charge of the parish by Robert Cooke, then Churchwarden.

'JOHANNES STOUGHTON.'

Under 1665 this register contains this entry: 'Elizabeth, the relict of Oliver Cromwell, sometime Pro. of England, was buried Nov. 19.' John Cleypole, mentioned above, was her son-in-law, Master of the Horse to Cromwell and a member of his House of Lords.

The subject of fees has always been a prolific source of contention, and a memorandum in the register of St. Peter's, Canterbury, is curious:

'Met with so much difficulty in getting the

dues for breaking ground in the Church and Prayers in the Church for a funeral on Feb. 13, 1788, that I find myself under the necessity on such fees becoming due in future to insist on their being paid before the ground is broke up, or the corps admitted into the Church.

'N.B.—The above-mentioned fee not paid till applied for [by] M^r^ De Lasaux, Proctor of the Ecclesiastical Court, and not received till March 6, several days after such application.

'*Mem.*—The demanding the fees on such occasions is what I have been advised to, by persons well versed in Ecclesiastical Law. Of my intention to insist upon these fees, before hand, I gave public notice at the vestry held for the choice of officers on Tuesday March 25, 1788.

'JOHN GOSTLING, Rector.'

But a further entry shows that the next time John Gostling was in trouble, it was on account of his refusing himself to pay. The entry begins thus:

'The Churchwardens of this parish having demanded a Church cess for the parsonage I refused to pay, I John Gostling, Rector of this Parish, and enter the following proofs of exemption from this demand, extracted from Burn's Ecclesiastical Law, 4^to^ edition, vol. i., page 270.' Then follows the extract, which is succeeded by another from the same authority, and a third, the reference to which is given as 'Degge P: l. c. 12.'

Similarly, in the Tottenham register, the parson has made this entry:

'Mrs. Flizabeth Husbands was buried April 1754, in my middle chancel, of whose Executor, Mr. Porton, I demanded and received £4 10— viz. 4£ for breaking up the ground in my said middle Chancel, and 10s. for performing the service on the occasion, and this from a full conviction that the register of this Parish gave me an undoubted right to demand and receive said fees.'

Another Rector seems to have got into terrible difficulties with one of his parishioners—owing to one of those pew scandals to which allusion has been made—and was 'arrested on an action of trespass.' An account of the dispute is recorded in the register of Woodmancote :

'On the 1st June Dr. Cooper'—Rector of this parish—'pulled down the great pew in the chancel in which the family of the Wests had nestled themselves, by the permission of former parsons, so long that they would now have it to be their owne. The Dr., thinking there was no other way to be rid of the birds, but by destroying their nest, notwithstanding their big looks and threats, did downe with it. Having been once, above two years ago, by the mother of West convented before the Bishops about it, for keeping him out while it stood, who could find nothing for her, only requested the Doctor's leave for her sitting there, but now shee having been long gone and forsaken it and us, her son Jacob usurping the seat, and disdaining my leave, I have dispossessed in this manner, and now expect what he will doe by the law. Jacob West hath declared how unwilling he

is to part with it, by his boys bringing a chair after him, to sitt in on the bare earth, which he did the next day, being Sunday, after the chancel door was opened for the incomers, which made sport to the people, in that he looked like one who would have been glad to be welcome, bringing his stoole with him.'

The memorandum adds that 'in October Mr. Jacob West arrested Dr. Cooper on an action of trespass, God knows what, and the Dr. ordered an appearance by his attorney, Mr. Whitpaine. In Nov^r^ Mr. Jacob West fell very sick, and employing Dr. Cooper for his physician, was well recovered. This trust and kindness on Mr. West his part, and trustyness & acceptance on the Doctor's, begat terms of pacification between them.' But it would seem that on Mr. West's complete recovery war was again declared: 'The Assize being at East Grinstead, on the 27^th^ March, in this year 1679, by my Counsellor, Mr. John Gratwick, and my attorney, Mr. John Whitpaine, I demurred to Mr. Jacob West's indictment; and now I wait for what more Mr. Jacob West can & will do.'

Again, an entry in the register of East Peckham, Kent, alludes to a serious complaint made against the parson of Brenchley, for allowing children to remain unbaptized, connected with which scandal we find this strange memorandum in the Peckham register, which in its own words explains the matter:

'1648. Upon the third of June the following infants all born in the parish of Brenchley were

baptized in this parish Church by an order granted from Sir John Sedley, Knight and Baronett, Sir John Rayney, and Sir Isaac Sedley, Knight :

'Whereas complaints have often been made unto us by many of the principal inhabitants of the Parish of Brenchley, that they having desired Mr. Gilbert minister of the said parish to baptize their Children, and according to the Directorie offered to present them before the Congregation, he hath neglected or refused so to do ; whereby divers infants remain unbaptized, some of them above a year old, expressly contrary to the said Directorie.

'We do therefore order that the parents of such children do bring them unto the Parish Church of East Peckham, whereby we desire that Mr. Topping, minister of the said Parish, would baptize them according to the said Directorie, they acquainting him with the day they intend to bring them beforehand.'

And in the year 1605 a charge was made against the Vicar of Rochdale, that *inter alia* he did not 'use the Cross in baptism.' This explains why, in the following year, in several instances, a small cross is made in the margin of the baptismal register.

In days gone by, it would seem that the parson was frequently called upon to make wills for his parishioners, and in one of the Sebergham parish registers we find a form, is given which was no doubt the one used for this purpose. Indeed, that the parson was expected to be the legal as well as the spiritual adviser of his parish may be gathered from the register above named,

where are given, not only a few legal precedents, but also the form of an inventory to a will, of a certificate for fitness to keep a public-house, and of a pass for a traveller. Occasionally the parson has entered in his register an extract from a will; and in that of St. Dunstan, Canterbury, between the burials of February 9, 1620, and June 10, 1621, a portion of the will of John Herring of Deal is inserted. The will is dated May 18, 1592. The testator bequeaths his soul into the merciful hands of God his Creator, with a full and certain hope of resurrection in the Day of Judgment. He gives to his wife, Elizabeth Heringe, all his movable goods, and four pounds four shillings, which John Pope of Deal owes him, towards the bringing up of his children. To his eldest son, Stephen, on his arriving at the age of nineteen years, he gives the house he now dwells in with six acres and half a rood of arable land, whereof $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres lie adjoining the said house, in a shot called Smoke and Drawe Smoke, and half an acre and half a rood in the West fielde, in a shot called Westowne; he also gives to his eldest son $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of marsh-land, lying in a marsh called Stokes Tye. To his youngest son, Thomas, he gives his house at 'Sholdon Church gate,' with $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres and 12 feet of land, then in the occupation of Thomas Piltocke. To his son Thomas he also gives 2 acres in Didham, and 1 acre, 3 roods lying at Southwall, in a marsh called Edolls Marsh. The house in which Thomas Dubletts was then living with the land annexed thereto,

and 2 acres of land in Eastland, were to be sold, and the money to be equally divided between the testator's three daughters, Constance, Dennis, and Elizabeth, when they reached eighteen years of age. The witnesses to the will were Richard Bowle, William Roberts, and Stephen Rickman; the last named, who belonged to Shoulden, was 'to be my Overseer to this my will,' while his wife was 'Executor.' But there is not any reference of any kind whatever to St. Dunstan's in the whole of the will.

And in the register of St. Peter's, Canterbury, is an extract from the will of Sallester Collens, late of Canterbury, widow, deceased, dated January 7, 1799. By this will she left to the minister and churchwardens of St. Peter's £50 to be laid out in the purchase of stock, the interest arising therefrom to be distributed among poor widowers and widows residing in the Parish of St. Peter, at the rate of one shilling each, on the 29th of January in every year for ever. If there should not be 'a sufficient number of that description,' then the shillings are to be distributed to such other poor as the minister and churchwardens shall think proper objects. The charity is still applied according to the intentions of Sallester Collens.

Sometimes the parson has broken the dryness and formality of his entries by little pieces of biography like the following entered in Dean parish registers:

'Robert ffletcher second sonne of Launcelot ffletcher parson of deane by his second wyfe

Susanna daughter of Mr. Robert Dabrè and Elizabeth his wyfe of the citie of Norwich baptized: 25 May 1598 departed this lyfe upon Sunday night the six and twenty of March 1626 about nyne of the Clock.

'He was brought up at Deane Schole: from there he did goe to London: and was student at lawe first in Clifford's Inne: then afterward admitted into the Inner Temple where he continued about seven years, then being sent for by his father he came at Whitsuntide home, to see his father: and by reason of the visitation at London stayed all that summer and winter till Lent following: when he was preparing to returne with his father to London to follow his studie, expecting at the next call to be called to the lawe: but it pleased God otherwise to dispose: and either by an Impostume in his breast or some Hart Collick after some ill fitte three or four days before, to take him to his mercie the time before mentioned and he was buried in the chancell close by his mother next the wall on the south syde upon Monday the seven and twenty of March 1626 he was a young man of good parts: of good and great Hopes: his death much lamented.

'Corpus terra tegit: Spiritus astra petit.'

Likewise, the early registers of Hammersmith, the work of the Rev. John Wade, parson from the year 1662 to 1707, are of an unusual character. They are written with great neatness, but are in substance the books of his receipts, interspersed with notes, in shorthand, of his sermons and other memoranda. The greatest space, perhaps, is

occupied by lists of the renters of pews, with the sums paid by each person. At the end of each quarter is added a list of the presents or gratuities which he received in addition to the 'pewage money.' Many of these were from occasional lodgers in the village. In 1670, Sir John Pye made Mr. Wade a present of 'Sinopsis Criticorum,' which he valued at thirty shillings.

A parson, evidently fond of statistics, makes two long entries on the tenacity of life evinced by his female parishioners, and ventures a joke on the subject. Ten women had buried fifteen husbands, 'and might perhaps have buried more, if they had had them, but all the men in Worldham parish at this time have had buried but three wives.'

A curious facsimile of early shorthand is given in the register of St. Chad, Saddleworth, Yorkshire. So far as it has been deciphered, it appears to be an extract from an old ballad, entitled 'The Gallow Tree Jowrney'; but why it should have been inserted it is impossible to say; although no doubt it had, at the time, some local interest. And then again, under 1649, the parson, in the register of Rodmarton, has given an item of chit-chat:

'In the Windowe by the doore of the South Isle adjoyning to the Chancel, was a little picture in the glasse, of one praying in the habit of a minister *cum baculo pastorali*, and under written, "Richardus Exall," which was broken by children, perhaps he was att the charge of that window. There is also upon the west side of Cotes Towre, in stone, "Orate pro animabus Ricardi Wiat & Ricardi de

Rodmerton"; it may bee it was this Richard which did joyne with the person of Cotes to build that towre.'

Another little memorandum, preserved in the register of Woodmansterne, Surrey, is to this effect :

'Thy whom it may concern are desired to take notice that the Chimny in the Hall-Chamber of the Parsonage House hath a *Summer* not far under one corner of it, soe that it may safely be used for any ordinary occasions for a small fire in a chamber, but it is not fit for soe great fires as the Parlour Chimney—1675.'

Oftentimes, again, the register contains a memorandum by the parson of gifts to the church after the following, which is entered in that of Peckleton, Leicestershire :

'In the beginning of this register—commencing in 1714—that posterity should know how much it is indebted to the present age, let it be first recorded, that Thomas Boothby, of Tooley Park, Esq., who had some time before, at his own charge, caused very handsome rails to be made before the Communion table of his parish Church of Peckleton, did at this time give to the said Church a very fair silver flagon and cup for the use of the Lord's table. And whereas before this there was but three small bells, about thirteen hundred weight, belonging to the Church : he caused six—about forty hundred weight—to be made and new hung up, and the steeple to be pointed at the same time, at his own sole and proper expence. He gave five pounds to the

rector, to defray the charge of underdrawing the Chancel.' Such remarks, whilst chronicling acts of munificence, are pleasing little illustrations of the liberal interest which the parishioner has generally taken in his parish church.

We may add that, in some cases, the parson, on taking leave of his parishioners, has bid them farewell in a poetical effusion, after the following fashion :

'To my Parishioners.

'Farewell, dear flock, my last kind wish receive,
The only tribute that I now can give,
May my past labours claim a just regard;
Great is the prize, and glorious the reward;
Transcendent joys, surpassing human thought,
To meet in heaven, whom I on earth had taught.'

These lines occur in the register of Great Easton, when 'Matthew Tomlinson, curate of this parish, left, Feb. 1, 1730.'



CHAPTER III.

SUPERSTITIONS AND STRANGE BELIEFS.

SOME of the old superstitions connected with our social life in the past have, from time to time, been incidentally noticed in the parish register; and in many instances these have been made the subject of special mention. As might be expected, there are numerous allusions to the great witchcraft movement, the first penal statute against this form of credulity having been enacted in the year 1541, when Cranmer enjoined the clergy 'to seek for any that use charms, sorcery, enchantments, witchcraft, soothsaying, or any like craft invented by the devil.'

An extraordinary occurrence is entered in the parish register of Brandeston, near Wickham Market, which at the present day seems scarcely possible. The facts are stated thus:

'6th May, 1596. John Lowes, Vicar.

'After he had been Vicar here about fifty years, he was executed in the time of the Long Rebellion, at St. Edmund's Bury, with sixty more, for being

a wizard. Hopkins, his chief accuser, having kept the poor old man, then in his eightieth year, awake for several nights, till he was delirious, and then confessed a familiarity with the Devil, which had such weight with the jury and his judges, as to condemn him in 1645, or the beginning of 1646.'

It appears, from a communication in the *Suffolk Literary Chronicle*, that some years after this disgraceful event, Mr. Rivett, who resided at Brandeston Hall, gave these additional particulars respecting the case: 'I have it from those who watched with him, that they kept him away several nights together, and ran him backwards and forward about the room until he was out of breath; then they rested him a little, and then they ran him again, and this they did for several days and nights together, till he was quite weary of his life, and scarce sensible of what he said or did.' It is further added that, being precluded Christian burial, he composedly read the service over himself on his way to execution.*

At a time, too, when death for witchcraft was a common occurrence, it was not unusual for the parson to notify such a punishment when it happened in his own parish register. Thus the registers of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, under August 21, 1650, contain this memorandum: 'These partis her under named were executed on the towne mor [moor] for wiches. Isabell Brown for a wich;' and the

* 'The Suffolk Garland.' John Glyde, June, 1866, pp. 244, 245.

names of fourteen other women follow, with the words 'for a wich' affixed to each. And it is added, 'The same day executed on the Town Mor belonging to the Kastel . . . and Jane Martin, the millars wif of Chattin for a wich.'

It seems that, in the year 1649, the people of Newcastle petitioned the Town Council that all persons suspected of witchcraft might be brought to trial. Their wish was granted by the local authorities, and accordingly a well-known 'witch-tryer' was sent for from Scotland. On the arrival of this formidable personage, the bellman went through the streets ringing his bell, and crying that any woman complained against for a witch should be forthwith sent for, and tried by the person selected to hear the cases appointed. 'Thirty women were brought for trial, most of whom were found guilty, only sixteen surviving their tortures to die on the gallows'; and in the Corporation Records for the same year, these items occur: 'Paid to the Constables for carrying the witches to gaol, 4^{s}; a grave for a witch, 6^{d}; for trying the witches, £1 5; and in the register of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester, under the year 1656, this entry is given: 'Three witches hanged at Michaelmas Assizes, buried in the corner by the Castle Ditch in Churchyard 8th of October.'

Mr. Dawson Turner, in the Appendix to his 'Sepulchral Reminiscences,' writes:

'At the Sessions, holden at Great Yarmouth, on Wednesday, the 13th day of March, in the 24th year of Queen Elizabeth, there were two women

indicted for witchcraft—viz Elizabeth Butcher, and Cecilia Atkyns, both of this town and found guilty. And because Elizabeth Butcher and Cecilia Atkyns were culprits, it is adjudged by the court that they should stand open in the pillory, in the Market, every Market Day, till with contrition of heart they had confessed their witchcraft, on which they should be set at large. At the Sessions held the 27th day of August in the following year, for the witchcraft aforesaid, it is decreed that Elizabeth Butcher, because she is culpable of the witchcraft and felony, above recited, shall be returned to the prison under the charge of the gaoler, there to remain till she has publicly confessed her crime, or there to abide for the space of a whole year, and, at the discretion of the bailiffs, to be put in the pillory, in the public market, for an example to others. At the Sessions held on April 15th 1584, the said Elizabeth Butcher was for a third time arraigned, and was then condemed to be hanged with another witch named Joan Lingwood.'

Three days after we find the following entry in the Burial Register:

'Jone Lingewood } Wytches hanged
Elizabethe Butcher } Apryll 18.'

'Alce Cresswell
Elizabeth Bardwell
Elizabeth Bugden
Bridggett Howard
Margt Blackbourne
} Executed for Witchcraft Buried September 29th 1645.'

As far down as the close of the seventeenth

century, persons were supposed to die from the effects of being bewitched.

In the register of Holy Island, Northumberland, this entry is given: '1691. William Cleugh, bewitched to death, buried 16 July'; and in the register of Coggeshall, Essex, under December 27th, 1699, the burial of widow Comon is recorded, 'that was counted a witch.' But one of the most curious cases recorded is one in the register of Wells, dated 1583, describing the perishing on the coast of fourteen persons (seamen?) coming from Spain, 'whose deaths were brought to pass by the detestable working of an execrable witche of King's Lynn, whose name was Mother Gabley; by the boyling, or rather labouring of certayn eggs in a paylefull of colde water.'

In the parish books of Brentford, under August 13, 1634, this entry is given: 'Paid Robert Warden, the Constable, which he disbursed for carrying away the witches, 6^{s}.' The witches of Brentford, it may be remembered, were notorious at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and they are alluded to by Mrs. Page in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' (Act iv., sc. 2); and one of the characters in Dekker and Webster's 'Westward Ho' says: 'I doubt that old hag, Gillian of Brainford, has bewitched me.' As recently as December 19, 1748, it is recorded in the register of Monk's Eleigh how 'Alice, the wife of Thomas Green, labourer, was swam of malicious and evil people having raised an ill report of her being a witch.'

Kindred forms of superstition are also occa-

sionally duly noticed. In many a country village, the 'wise-man,' or 'wise-woman,' was an important individual, having been frequently consulted by all classes where superior knowledge was required. In addition to 'casting nativities' such a person was, at any time, ready to give heads of families information as to the recovery of stolen property; and oftentimes in cases of illness, when medical aid had failed, his or her assistance was sought as a last resort. In the register of St. Margaret's, Durham, we are informed how one 'Christopher Pattison, vulga dict' ye wise-man,' was buried March 14, 1724; and some curious particulars are preserved in the parish of St. Benedict Fink, London, respecting a certain strange prophetess, whose death is thus described:

'On the morning after the fire in Sweetings Alley, July 12, 1660, was buried a strange maid out of Edward Barbour's house, being daughter to a prophetess, who named herself Mima Hecres, but would not declare neither her own right name, nor the maid's; yet the maid being searched was found to die of a fever, and so was permitted to be buried.'

The fortune-teller, who plied a brisk trade in years gone by, also obtained due mention in the register, and at Stepney there was buried on September 24, 1628, one commonly known as 'William, a dumb man, who died in Ratcliffe Highway, a fortune-teller.' And then, as nowadays, there was to be met with that kind of convenient woman who could turn her hand to anything, her advice and knowledge having been much

in request in any case of emergency. At Attleburgh, Norfolk, there was buried on August 11, 1625, 'Mary, wife of Gilberte Greene, hoastess of the Cock, who knew how to gain more by her trade than any other, and a woman free and kind for any in sickness, or woman in her travail or childbed, and for answering for anyone's child, and ready to give to anyone's marriage.'

The use of talismans, amulets and charms, which has generally been a feature of the cunning contrivances of fortune-tellers and others skilled in secret arts—through being thought to savour of the same Satanic influence as witchcraft—was most severely censured and punished; and the register of a Scotch parish has this entry under November 10, 1716:

'Christian Lessels being charged and interrogate upon threatning mallifice to her neighbour, and using charming for the recovery of ane child y^t^ was sick, she acknowledges both these crimes, and says as to y^e^ threatning she was in a passion and confesses her guilt y'rin, and as to y^e^ charm she did it simply and ignorantly being advised y'rto by a north countryman.'

Gipsies, again, as dealing in the black arts, were specially sought after by the authorities, and as far back as 22 Henry VIII., there is 'an Act concerning Outlandish People, calling themselves Egyptians,' 'using no craft or merchandize, but deceiving people, that they by palmistry, bearing them in hand, can tell men's and women's fortunes, and so cheat people of their money, and commit many heinous felonies and robberies.' This Act

was apparently by no means a dead letter, for, in the year 1592, the register of St. Nicholas, Durham, relates how three men were hanged 'for being Egyptians.' But, whatever may have been the faults of this class of impostors, they seem to have conformed to the usages of the Church. Thus, for instance, it is recorded how at Louborough, in the year 1581, 'Margaret Bannister, daughter of William Bannister, going after the name of roguish Egyptians, was baptized the 2nd April'; and a similar entry occurs in the register of Lanchester: 'William, the son of an Egyptian, bap. 19 Feb. 1564.'

In the parish register of St. Bees, too, it is recorded under May 4, 1596, that 'Willielmus filius Willielmi Volantyne, Egyptii, baptizatus fuit.' It is somewhat doubtful, however, whether 'Volantyne' is a surname, or we ought to read 'Volantis Egyptii'—'fleeing Egyptian'—as this peculiar people were deemed and gave themselves out to be.*

The Camberwell register gives the marriage on June 2, 1687, of 'Robert Hern and Elizabeth Boswell King and Queen of the Gipsies.' These parties were probably from the southern precincts of Camberwell, about Norwood, a place generally recognised as one of the favourite resorts of the gipsies. Some years ago, Henry Boswell, well known as the father and King of the Gipsies, in Lincolnshire, died in affluent circumstances, and was buried at Wittering.†

* 'Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archæological Transactions,' vol. i., p. 298.

† Allport's 'Camberwell and its Neighbourhood,' p. 79.

A curious case of the burial of a reputed gipsy, and of the subsequent exhumation of the body, is entered in the register of Malmesbury, under September, 1657:

'John Buckle, reputed to be a Gypsie, deceased September 21, 1657, at John Perins house upon the Fosse, in Shipton Parish, in Gloucestershire, and was buried in King Athelstone's Chappell, by King Athelstone & the Ladye Marshall, within the Abbie Church at Malmsbury. This burial was September 23rd 1657. Howbeit hee was taken up againe—by means of Mr Thomas Frye, esquier, who then lived in the Abbie, & by the desyres and endeavours of others—out of the said Chappell, and was removed into the Churchyarde, and there was reburied near the east side of the Church porch, October 7th 1657, in the p'sence of Mr Thos Frye, of the Abbie, Esq. Mr Pleadewell, of Mudgell, esquier, Richd Whitmore, of Slaughter, in the Countie of Gloucester, & Dr. Qui, of Malmesbury, with very many others.'

A mode of divination still common among the lower orders is that designated the 'sieve and the shears,' instances of which may occasionally be read in the police-court reports. According to the register of Bedworth, Warwickshire, in the year 1715, a woman called Elizabeth Bott was admonished for 'using curious arts, turning the sieve.'

And in the year 1719, is denounced in the same register 'the evil of our members going to be touched by a seventh son in order to cure diseases, and then wearing the silver he gives

them.' This superstition originated in an old belief—also found to a large extent on the Continent—that the seventh son was born a physician, and possessed an intuitive knowledge of the art of healing all disorders, and even occasionally the faculty of performing wonderful cures by touching only.

In the *Dublin University Magazine* for August, 1879, the silver charm alluded to above is thus described :

'A particular ceremony must be observed at the moment of the infant's birth, in order to give him his healing power. The person who receives him in her arms places in his tiny hands whatever substance she decides that he shall rub with in after-life, and she is very careful not to let him touch anything else until this has been accomplished. If silver be the charm, she has provided a sixpenny or threepenny bit ; but as the coinage of the realm may change possibly during his lifetime, and thus render his cure valueless, she has more likely placed salt or meal on the table within reach.'

In the 'Diary of Walter Yonge' (Camden Society), we find this entry, which is a curious illustration of this strange belief :

'In January, 1606-7, it is reported from London by credible letters, that a child being the seventh son of his mother, and no woman child born between, healeth deaf, blind, and lame ; but the parents of the child are popish, as so many say as are healed by it. The Bishop of London, Doctor Vaughan, caused divers to be brought to the child

as aforesaid, who said a short prayer as (he) imposed his hands upon, as 'tis said he did unto others; but no miracle followeth any, so that it appeareth to be a plain lie invented to win grace to the popish faction.'

But if the touch of a 'seventh son' was commonly thought to be beneficial, it is only too well known what extraordinary faith was put in the 'royal touch'—it having been a very widespread belief that the Sovereign could cure scrofula 'without other medicine, save only by handling and prayers.' Before anyone, however, could avail himself of this privilege, he had to comply with certain regulations — no one having been allowed to repair to the Court without a certificate from the parson of his parish that he had never been touched before. Hence registers of parishes in the neighbourhood of the Court often contain entries of these certificates; although our Kings and Queens were accustomed to touch for this disease while in their progresses. Hambledon register, Bucks, under May 17, 1685, tells how 'Mary Wallington had a certificate to goe before the King for a disease called the King's Evil,' and further instances are given in the register of Merstham, Surrey. It may be noted that in the Camberwell register the names of those persons who were touched in the year 1684 are entered promiscuously among the baptisms and burials, without mentioning the time, place, or circumstances.*

* See Allport's 'Camberwell and its Neighbourhood,' pp. 77, 78.

On the title-page of the register of Alfold, Surrey, is this memorandum :

'27, 1710. I gave a certificate to be touched for the Evil in these words : Surrey SS. These are to certify to whom it may concern that James —son of Henry—Napper bearer hereof is a legal inhabitant of our parish of Alford in the County of Surrey aforesaid, and is supposed to have the disease commonly called the Evil, and hath desired this our certificate accordingly.'



CHAPTER IV.

EPIDEMICS.

THE ravages of pestilence from which the country has at intervals suffered, form the subject of occasional mention in the parish register, the terrible mortality caused by such epidemics having been but rarely specially commented upon.

Indeed, it is to be regretted that we do not learn more from the registers of the diseases from which our forefathers died. In the register of St. Alphage, Canterbury, we read of Richard Harryse, who 'died of the worms,' and in the year 1784 small-pox is mentioned. And in the Hawkshead register under November 18, 1577, this memorandum is given: 'A pestilent sickness was brought into the parish by one George Barwicke and thirty-eight of the inhabitants died.'

The sweating sickness, 'the strange and peculiar plague of the English nation,' as Mr. Froude describes it, first showed itself in the year 1485, reappeared in 1506, again in 1517, and raged with fatal fury in the year 1551. This epidemic

is, in all probability, alluded to in the subjoined entries given in the register of Maresfield, under October, 1538 :

'In the said month, and the ixth day thereon, I buried a child of the rayning sickness, whose name was called Parnell Carvell.

'*Item.*—I also buried John Hayman, the xiii daye of October, of the rayning sickness.'

Bishop Kennett describes the sweating sickness as 'a new, strange, and violent disease ; for, if a man were attacked therewith, he died or escaped within nine hours ; if he took cold he died within three hours ; if he slept within six hours—as he should be desirous to do—he died raving.' It seems chiefly to have attacked men in the prime of life, and of the strongest constitutions. But the outbreak of the year 1551 was unusually virulent, and Dr. Caius, the leading English physician of his time, prepared a treatise for the use of his countrymen at this crisis. This plague seems to have been known under a variety of names, some of which we find enumerated in an entry in Loughborough register, Leicestershire : '1551, June. The swat, called New Acquaintance, alias Stoupe Knave and Know thy Master, began the 24th of this month.' It was also termed 'the "posting-sickness" that posted from towne to towne throughe England, and was named "Stope Gallant" for hytt spared none, for ther were dawncying in the Courte at 9 o'clocke that were deadd at eleven o'clock.' In the registers of Uffcolme, Devon, for August, 1551, it is described as 'the Stup-gallant or the hote sickness.' This

quaint name, says the late Mr. Chester Waters,* 'was taken from the French, for the epidemic which ravaged France in 1528 was called the "trousse gallant," because it chiefly attacked young men in full health and strength. In the same grotesque spirit the plague of 1675 was called the "jolly rant" at Newcastle-on-Tyne.'

This epidemic was followed by the plague, which broke out at repeated intervals. Thus, in the year 1592 it made its appearance, and the infection was rapidly carried into the provinces, as may be gathered from entries like the following:

'St. Alkmond's, Derby. 1592, October. Hic incipit pestis pestifera.' This visitation lasted a year, and then suddenly ceased, as this memorandum from the register of All Saints', Derby, dated October, 1593, shows: 'About this time the plague of pestilence by the great mercy and goodness of God stayed, past all expectation of man, for it ceased upon a sodayne, at whych time it was dispersed in every corner of this whole parish; there was not two houses together free from it, and yet the Lord bade the Angel stay, as in David's tyme, hys name be blessed for that.' And this year, according to the register of St. Pancras, Soper Lane, London, 'the plague was very quick in London, ostie par la pyte l'ire de Dieu enflamme à l'enconter la ville.'

Indeed, some idea of the extreme virulence of this epidemic may be gathered from the registers

* 'Parish Registers,' 1887, p. 72.

of St. Peter's, Cornhill, where, under the year 1593, this memorandum is entered in the margin :

'Thear dyed in London in all- - 25,886
Of them of the plague in all - - 15,003
Within the walles and liberties - 8,598
Without, in & out of liberties - 17,288'

Then follow these two entries:

'Innumeros quamius consumpsit, morbida pestis
Seruait dominus meq' domumq' meam.'

'In a thousand five hundred ninety & three,
The Lord preserved my house and mee.
When of the pestilence theare died
Full maine a thousand els beeside.'

In the year 1594 there was 'the first plague in Ashborne,' and the following curious memorandum occurs in the register of Cranbrook, Kent:

'In this year following, 1597, began the great plague in Cranbrook, the which continued from April the y^r^ afs^d^ to July 13, 1598. 1^st^, it was observed that before this infection that God, about a year or two before, took away by death many honest and good men and women. 2. That the judgment of God for sin was much before threatened, especially for that vice of Drunkenness which abounded thar. 3. That this infection was in all quarters of the Parish except Hartly quarter. 4. That the same begun in the house of one Brightelling, out of which much theiving was committed, and that it ended in the House of one Henry Grynnock, who was a pott companion, and

his wife noted much for incontinence, which both died excommunicated. 5. That this infection gott almost into all the Inns and Suckling Houses of the Town, places then of much misorder, so that God did seem to punish that himself which others did neglect and not regard. 6. Together with this infection there was a great dirth at the same time, which was cause also of much wailing and sorrow. 7. This was most grievous unto me of all, that this judgment of God did not draw people unto repentance the more, but many by it seemed the more hardened in their sin.' And there is added this note: 'Now also this year others of the plague were buried near to their several dwellings, because they could get none to carry them into the Church, for it was the beginning of this infection, so that none would venture themselves. The certain day of their burials one could not learn.'

A memorandum in the parish register of Loughborough informs us that 'the assizes were kept and held at Loughborough, the 17th day of July, because the plague was in Leicester,' and adds, 'there were eight persons executed and buried the 19th day of July in this year 1654.'

Under the year 1603, it is recorded in the registers of St. Peter's, Cornhill, that from December 23, 1602, there were buried in this parish 158 persons, and 'of them of the plague 87'; and it is added: 'Buried in all this yeare both without and within the liberties; and in the 8 out parishes from the 14th July, 38,244: of them of the plague 31,578.' And the epidemic

of 1603 is denoted in the registers of St. Dunstan's in the West, London, by a very considerable increase of interments, and by a total absence of persons of rank or importance, for all who possessed means of escape had fled.

In the year 1604, an entry in the register of St. Giles, Durham, tells how 'Ann Ourd, wife of Christopher Ourd, was buried on 25th Jany,' and significantly adds, 'So all the household dyed in the vicitacion at this time, and so ye plague ceased.'

The parish register of Nantwich gives the following account of this terrible epidemic :

'1604, July. This yeare together with the former yeare and the year following this Realme of England was vissited with a contagious plauge generally : whereof many thousands in London, and other townes and Cities dyed of the same. The said plauge begane in our Towne of Nampt-wich about the 24th June 1604, being brought out of Chester and here dispersed diversly, soe yt presently our Market was spoyled, the town abandoned of all the wealthy inhabitants, who fledd for refuge into dieurs places of the Country adjoyninge. But of those which remained at home ther Dyed from the 12th June till the 2nd March followinge about the number of 430 persons of all deseases. Now seeing God in mercy hath withdrawn his punishinge hand, and hath quenched the spark of contagious infection among us, God graunt that we by Repentaunce may prevent further punishment & that the remembrance of this plauge past, may remain in our hearts for that purpose for ever. Amen.'

Peterborough was in the year 1606 visited by the plague, for, according to a marginal memorandum, 'Henry Renoulds came from London where he dwelt, sicke of the plague and died; so did his sonne, his daughter, and his servant; only his wyfe and her mayde escaped with Soars. The plague brought by this means to Peterborough continued there till September following.'

In the year 1625, we learn from the register of Little Marlow, Bucks, that 'Mary, the wife of William Borlase, July 18, 1625, a gratuitous ladye she was, dyed of the plague, as did eighteen more,' showing that the terrible visitation of this year, which is said to have taken off in London alone as many as 35,417 persons, extended its ravages into most parts of the country. The desolation it caused in Cheshire is evident from the subjoined entries in the register of Malpas, relating only to one family:

'1625, Aug. 13. Thomas Dawson of Bradley, Thomas Jefferies his servant, and Richard Dawson, his son, were buried in the night. Ralph Dawson, another son of Thomas, came from London about the 25th of July past, and being sick of the plague died in his father's house, and infected the said house, and was buried, as was reported, neare unto his father's house.'

On August 15 Thomas Dawson was buried at 3 a.m. Later on in the same month we have the harrowing scene of a plague-stricken man digging his own grave, and knowing that the survivors of his family would be unable to bury him.

'Aug. 24. Richard Dawson, brother to the

above-named Thomas Dawson of Bradley, being sicke of the plague and perceyveing he must die at y^{t} time, arose out of his bed and made his grave, and caused his nefew John Dawson to cast strawe into the grave, w'ch was not far from the house, and went and lay'd him down in the sayd grave, and caused clothes to be layd uppon, and so dep'ted out of this world ; this he did, because he was a strong man, and heavier than his said nefew and another wench were able to bury. He died about the xxivth of August. Thus much was I credibly tould he did.'

A few days later on his son was seized with the plague, and died in a ditch.

'Aug. 29. John Dawson sonne of the above-mentioned Thomas Dawson, came unto his father when his father sent for him being sicke, and haveyng layd him down in a dich, died in the night.' And on September 15 this entry occurs : 'Rose Smyth, servant of the above-named Thomas Dawson, and the last of y^{t} household, died of plague, and was buryed by W^{m} Cooke near unto the said hows.'

The whole household was thus exterminated. And yet, happily, there seems to have been an exception to this terrible mortality, for a memorandum in the register of Witham, under the year 1625, rnus thus : 'It is remarkable that in this yeare, being a time of plague and mortality over the whole kingdom, there was no buriall. Laus Deo.'

In the register of St. Dunstan's in the West, London, all who died, or were supposed to die, of

the epidemic of 1625, are marked with a P, the first entry so distinguished running thus :

'June 25. P. Isabell Cadman, wid', from the backeside of the bell.'

It appears that in this visitation as many as 754 persons perished in one parish, part of which was then fields and gardens, and the whole population of which in the year 1831 was only 3,443. Scarcely 'any other persons above the untitled commonalty are to be found in the register ; but there is a servant of Lady Bret, and a woman from Sir Robert Rich's.' In Nichols' 'Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica,' v. 384, the 'whole career of this tyrant malady' is given, with the mortality from day to day.

An entry from Isham register, under the year 1630, says that 'this yeare was a great plague at Cambridge, so that ther was no Stirbryshe Fair kept, and this was a dear yeare, wheat at eight shillings a strike, Pease six shillings and Mault at six shillings & eightpence—Pease at five shillings never so deare as at this time.' And another outbreak occurred fourteen years later on, in 1644, at Egglescliffe, Durham, the register containing this memorandum : 'In this year there died of the plauge in this towne, one and twenty people ; they are not all buried in the Churchyard, and are not in the Register.' The circumstances, writes Burn,* 'of persons being buried in the fields, who had died of the plague, will, in many cases, satisfactorily account for the discovery of human bones in the vicinity of towns and villages. A

* 'History of Parish Registers,' p. 111.

field at Ealing where those who died of the plague were buried is still called Dead Man's Field.'

But it was in the years 1664 and 1665 that the plague made its ever-memorable appearance, the first official notice of which appears to have been an Order in Council, dated April 26, 1665, announcing that it had broken out in the parish of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields; and in Pepys' Diary, under April 30, we get a glimpse of the coming horror: 'Great fears of the sickness here in the city, it being said that two or three houses are already shut up. God preserve us all.' Curious to say, no particular mention is made of the 'great plague' in the registers of St. Michael's, Cornhill, but the proportion of entries compared with other years shows how severe it must have been. Under November 18, 1665, we find this entry: 'Mary Turner, 18 daie, was baptized, as appears by the Register Book of Chigwell, borne the Great Sicknes time at Munkon, Mary the doughter' [the rest cut out].

In the parish of Stepney, it is said that within the year 116 sextons, grave-diggers, and their assistants died; and in a memorandum in the register of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester, we are told that 'the plague takes them very strangely, strikes them black one side & then they run mad, some drown themselves, others would kill themselves, they dye within few hours, some run up & down the streets in their shirts to the great horrour of those in the city.'

Mr. George Ayscough, who some years ago examined many of the parish registers of Leicester-

shire, makes this remark on the parish of Wigston: 'I find no mention of any particular disorder having been in this town, whence it may be concluded to be a healthful situation. In the year 1771 the disorder mostly complained of was the ague; and it was found difficult to cure, chiefly owing, I apprehend, to the water being suffered to lay in the streets, the passages to carry it off not being properly opened; a real fen, or an artificial one, having the same effect on the human frame.'

In the year 1703 an epidemic of fever seems to have broken out in the neighbourhood of Collingbourne Ducis, connected with which may be quoted the subjoined entries:

'William Brown buryed May 1st. Memdum—the five last registered died of a feavour which was very fatall in ys and ye upper parish—Collingbourne Kingston—and more especially to such who were lett bloud in ye time of ye sicknesse; fifteen died in Collingbourne Kingston within ten weekes; ye distemper probably caused ye late mild winter.

'1703. Robert Marshman, of ye same distemper June ye 6th. By experience it was found yt a cōmon medicine called Decoctum Sacrum was of excellent use, few dying of ys feavour who made use of yt remedy.'

Similar scraps of folk-medicine are occasionally entered in the register. Thus, the following recipe for the plague is given at the end of the register for burials belonging to St. Swithun's, East Retford. The writing is much faded, and has

been transcribed in a later hand underneath. The original runs as follows:

'In ye time of a plague let y^e^ person either infected or fearfull of y^e^ infection take a pennyworth of dragon water a pennorth of oyle olive, methradate 1^d^ & treacle 1^d^ then take an onion, & fill it full of pepper w^n^ you scraped it, y^n^ roast it; and after y^t^ put it to y^e^ liquor & strain & drink it in y^e^ morning, and if you take y^e^ same at night lay soap and bay salt to your feet & sweat upon it, & with God's blessing you shall recover.'

In the parish register of Swettenham, Cheshire, is the following remedy for the bite of a mad dog:

'1704—To cure the bite of a mad dog or cat. Take six ounces of rue, small sliced, four ounces of garlic stampt & pild, four ounces of mithridate or Venice treacle, four ounces of syruppe, or filde or scrapt pure English tin or peawter; boyle these in 5 pints of old ail over a gentle fire for an hour, then strain it, and keep the liquor in a glass or close vessel.

'And thus you are to use this medicine:

'To a man that is bit you are to give 8 or 9 spoonfulls warm in a morning fasting, and every day apply some of the ingredients which remain after the liquor is strained off to the wound; but give it cold to beasts. To a sheep 3 spoonfulls, to a dog 4, to a horse or cow between 16 & 18, and they must be given 7 or 8 days together after the bite.

'If you add a handfull of ash-coloured liverwort to this receipt, it hath been found an excellent thing, it grows on all dry grounds.'

With this curious recipe we may compare an equally odd one for curing the bite of a mad dog hung up in Sunninghill Church :

'Six ounces of rue picked from the stalk, and bruised ; four ounces of garlic, bruised ; four ounces of Venice treacle, & four ounces of scrapings of pewter. These are to be boiled in two quarts of strong ale over a slow fire, until reduced to one quart ; the liquor then to be strained off, and kept close corked in a bottle. Nine spoonfuls, warm, to a man or woman fasting, for seven mornings successively & six spoonfuls to a dog. Apply some of the ingredients, warm, to the bitten part.'

This recipe, it is said, was taken from Gathorp Church, Lincolnshire, where many persons had been bitten by a mad dog. Those who used the medicine recovered ; those who did not died mad.



CHAPTER V.

PARISH SCANDALS AND PUNISHMENTS.

THE severity with which notorious delinquents were punished in olden times forms the subject of many an entry in the parish register. Prompt and stern measures were taken by local authorities to restrain those who endangered the place or created a public scandal, the mode of punishment adopted occasionally serving as a wholesome deterrent to others.

Many villages, for instance, had a cucking or ducking stool, in which offenders against the common weal were placed, and at Kingston-on-Thames we are told how, on Tuesday, August 19, 1572, the wife of a man named Downing, 'grave-maker of this parish, was set on a new cukking stolle made of great hight, and so brought about the Market place to Temes brydge, and there had three duckings overhead and eres, because she was a common scolde and fyghter.' And from the churchwardens' accounts for the same year we may presume that the following bill of expenses were for this cucking-stool :

		s.	*d.*
'1572.	The making of the cucking stool - -	8	0
	Iron work for the same - - -	3	0
	Timber for the same - - - -	7	6
	3 brasses for the same and three wheels	4	10'

To a late period Kingston appears to have kept up this old custom, for in the *London Evening Post*, April 27 to 30, 1745, there is this paragraph:

'Last week a woman that keeps the Queen's Head alehouse at Kingston, in Surrey, was ordered by the Court to be ducked for scolding, and was accordingly placed in the Chair, and ducked in the river Thames, under Kingston Bridge, in the presence of two or three thousand people.'

In the register of Uttoxeter is a charge:

'For repairing stocks and cucking stool - - 10s'

And in the registers of Bilston, for the year 1695, we find:

'For a new ducking stoole for ye parish - - 10s.'

Then there were the parish stocks, which were in days gone by much used for the punishment of disorderly persons, the last pair seen in London being that for the parish of St. Clement Danes, which remained till the year 1827, in Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. A whipping-post generally adjoined the stocks, that belonging to the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields being preserved in a vault beneath the church. In Burbach register it is recorded that 'William Townsend, Baker, planted a young elm tree near the stocks' in December, 1706; and an instance of a woman being so whipped is given in an entry in the parish

register of Croft, Yorkshire: 'Jane Buttrey, of Darlington, was seet in the Stoxe at Crofte and was whipte out of the Towne the 3rd day of Jan. 1673.'*

The following memorandum occurs in the register of Newtimber, and informs us how in September, in the year 1615, 'Robert Kinge, being about fifteene years of age, borne, as he confesseth, at Kynbury, in the Countie of Berkshire, was taken to the parish of Newtimber, vagrant, and there whipped according to the lawe, for his conduct to the parish of Kynbury aforesaid, being the place of his abode;'—this punishment being, it would seem, inflicted for the wrong done to the parish which he had deserted. Had this happened forty years before, he would probably have been hanged; such, at least, was the practice in the North of England.†

Whipping was a common mode of dealing with notorious breakers of the law, no respect having been paid to either sex. There can be no doubt that such a punishment, through being publicly—oftentimes in the market-place—performed, had a strong check on the actions of the unruly. At Kingston-on-Thames, on September 8 in the year 1752, there were hanged no less than six persons, and 'seventeen taken for rogues and vagabonds' were 'whypped abowte the market-place and brent in the ears.' Indeed, entries of this kind are very numerous, and are interesting as illustrating parochial discipline in the past. On July 5, 1698, 'a

* See Brand's 'Pop. Antiq.,' 1849, vol. iii., pp. 103, 104.

† 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., pp. 275, 276.

beggar woman of Slapton' was 'whipt at Mentmore,' Oxon; and at Brentford, on February 26, 1698, 'Alice and Elizabeth Pickering, wandering Children, were whipped according to Law and sent with a Pass to Shrewsbury, the place where they were born.' The reference here is to the vagrant laws—in force until the year 1744—which enacted that any persons found begging 'were, by the appointment of the head-borough, or tithingman, assisted by the advice of the minister of the parish, to be openly whipped till they were bloody, and then sent from parish to parish, until they came to the parish in which they were born.'

To quote further instances, in the register of Godalming, under April 26, 1658, this memorandum is given:

'Here was taken a vagrant, one Mary Parker, widow with a child, and she was whipped according to law, about the age of thirty years, proper of personage; and she was to go to the place of her birth that is in Gravesend, in Kent, and she is limited to iiij days, and to be carried from tithing to Tything till she comes to the end of the said journey.'

And at the end of the register belonging to the Church of St. Mary, at Cerne Abbas, is a copy of the statute of 39 Elizabeth for the suppression of rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars, the persons punishable being scholars and wayfaring men, fencers, etc., who were to be whipped and sent out 'of the parish.' And to show the careful manner in which the law had been carried out, the subjoined memorandum may be quoted:

'1661—a registered book for all such rogues and vagabonds as have been punished according to law at Cerne Abbas, in Derbyshire. Oct. 11—James Balden and E. Balden his wife, Thomas Balden, Robert Balden, and E. Balden, their sons, and Joseph Dallinger rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, weare punished according to law at Cerne Abbas, and sent with testimoniall from Constable to Constable to Powell, in Cornwall, the place of their ordinary abode, there to worke at hard labour as good subjects ought to do.'

Again, at Wadhurst, Sussex, many cases of whipping occurred in the year 1633, the register having these entries:

'11th June, Anne Diplock was whipped for a rogue.'

'10th Dec. John Palmer and Alice, his wife, were whipped for rogues.'

'23rd. Thomasina Hemming, John Ballard, Margery Oiles, Robert Spray, and John Sargent whipped.'

How universal the practice of whipping offenders was in days of old may be gathered from John Taylor, 'the Water Poet,' who, writing in the year 1630, says:

> 'In London, and within a mile, I ween,
> There are jails or prisons full eighteen,
> And sixty whipping-posts, and stocks and cages.'

The register of Kensington parish contains this entry: 'William Laughford was punished as a Roage the 1st December 1604. William Brewer and Kathren his wyf were pu'shed eodem.'

The register of Little Brickhill, which contains the names of fifty-two criminals who were executed

in this parish between the years 1561 and 1620, also has the following important entry: 'Cecely Reves was buried the same day, burned.' A similar entry is given in the registry of All Saints', Derby, under August 1, 1556: 'A poor blinde woman called Joan Waste of this parish, a martyr, burned in Windmill Pit.' And at Richmond, Yorkshire, it is recorded how Richard Snell was burnt, and buried on September 9; and the following note by Archdeacon Blackburne is appended to this entry: 'Concerning this matter, Mr. John Fox, the Martyrologist, writes thus: "There were two of the Snells taken up for their religion. One, after his toes were rotted off by lying in prison, by order of Dakins, the Bishop of Chester's Commissary, and so went upon crutches, at last went to mass, having a certain sum of money given him by the people; but in three or four days after, drowned himself in a river called Swail, by Richmond. The other Snell was burned."'

Under May 16, 1640, a curious and interesting entry relative to military discipline is to be found in the registers of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, which records how two 'sogers for denying the kynges pay was by a kownsell of war appoynted to be shot at a pare of galos set up before Tho Malabars in the byg [barley] market. They kust lotes wich should dy and the lotes did fall on one Mr. Anthone Viccars and he was set against a wall and shot at by six light horsemen, and was bured in owr churchyard the same day May 16.'

And in the register of St. Mary Magdalene,

Canterbury, these instances of military discipline are given :

'November : ye : 1 : being All Saints in ye : yeare 1694 then a soldier in the Reagement of one Coronal Coote and in his Company was shott to death in the farther Deane Joh[n] the day aboue written and buried in the Chappel yard in Burgat ground.'

'July ye 9 : 1696 Then a Soulger in Coronal Tittcomb Reagment was shott for deserrter and in ye heither Deane John and buried at ye same place whea[r] he was shott.'

And when death was the penalty for stealing, the parson, from time to time, entered in the register any cases that occurred in his parish. Thus, a memorandum in the register of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, tells how on August 12, in the year 1639, 'Robart Robsone (was) bured which was hanged for stelling of a horse from Thomas Dining the myller.' At Burbage, Wiltshire, on August 18, 1728, were buried 'Simon Evans, John Evans, and John Barley, executed at Salisbury for house-robbery.' And on August 21, 1650, one Ellenor Robson was hanged for 'stelling of silver spoones'; and on the same day eight prisoners were 'executed on the towne mor belonging to the Hy Kastell for stelling.' Judging, indeed, from incidental entries in the registers of this parish, hanging seems to have been carried on in a somewhat wholesale fashion. Thus, under April 6, 1638, it appears that four were hanged : 'Four hanged and buried in oure Church yard— Jo Harop within the Church sone of George

Harop hanged. Jo Hall hanged. Jayn Jacksone hanged. Ralph Dode hanged.' And on another occasion as many as twenty persons met this fate in one day. And in the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, we read :

'Memorandum:—That in ye yeare : 1698 in August ye 9 ye Lord Chef Justices Hoult and Justices Scrogg Holt sat on Isapris [Nisi Prius] and Scrogg one life and death and then was condemned 6 men : 3 deare stelers : 2 seamen and : 1 : mason.'

Mr. Joseph Meadows Cowper adds : 'Canterbury was well supplied with gibbets. By whichever road a stranger entered the city, the ghastly spectacle of the gallows, with the bodies of one or more felons dangling therefrom, would be almost sure to meet his gaze.'*

And we may note here an entry of the burial, in the year 1643, in the register of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester, of one who had no doubt in his lifetime helped many an unfortunate person out of this world : 'John Edwards, the Hangman, buried in North Churchyard 17th of November.'

Speaking of executions, the parish register of Hawkshead, under April 8, 1672, records the following :

'Thomas L—— who for poysoning his owne family was adjudg'd att the Assizes att Lancaster to bee carried backe to his owne house at Hye Wray where hee lived, and was there hanged before his owne door till hee was dead, for that

* 'Registers of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury.' Introduction, vi.

. . . then was brought with a horse and . . . into the Caulthouse meadow and forthwith hunge upp in iron chaynes on a gibbet which was sett for that very purpose on the south side of Sawrey . . . near unto the Pooll Stang and there continued until the time as hee rotted, and ye bone from . . .'

And the register of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West has this curious entry:

'1649. Aug. 18. Mr Dawbeny Dysme, gent. of the Temple. He was hanged at Tyburne, for pistolling a man in Holborne; &, being brought from thence in a boate, he was interred by the way-side. Twenty-four hours after, he was buried, out of ye Inner Temple, in ye further Churchyard.'

A burial entry in the register of Chute, Wiltshire, under the year 1617, runs as follows:

'—— Luke Fox, being endicted, arraigned, and found guiltie for murthering Robert Corderoy, gent. the thirteenth day of July, in the yeare of our Lord 1611, and being executed for the same at Fisherton Anger, was buryed there the xxiiijth day of July.'

It would appear, writes Mr. Poole in his 'Customs, Superstitions and Legends of Staffordshire,' that collections were made in the churches for the keeping of the gibbets in repair, and he quotes an entry from the old registers of Wolverhampton Church—'1555. Charities to a gibbet beyond Bilston;' and in the registers of St. Leonard's, Bilston, are the following items:

	s.	*d.*
'1692. For setting up ye gibbett - - -	2	6
1701. For repairing ye gibbett - - -	1	10'

And, he adds, there used to be a piece of land in Bilston, as appears from the old rate assessment books, known as 'No Man's Piece,' where the bodies of unfortunate persons, who had been gibbeted, were buried. Up to the last few years a lane between Bilston and Wolverhampton was popularly designated Gibbet Lane, a local tradition assigning it as the locality where the gibbet formerly stood.

Many remarkable cases of penance performed in the parish church for acts of unchastity have been preserved, it having been required that persons guilty of any such scandal should openly confess the same. Attired in a white sheet, and carrying a faggot, the offender was placed in some conspicuous place in the sacred edifice, where, in the presence of the parishioners, a public acknowledgment of the wrong committed was made in a prescribed form of words. The register of Croydon tells us how a certain Margaret Sherioux did not long survive her disgrace. It appears that 'she was enjoined to stand three market days in the town and three Sabbath days in the Church; in a white sheet, with a paper on her back and bosom showing her sin. . . . She stood one Saturday and one Sunday, and died the next.' We learn from the register of North Aston, Oxfordshire, that a 'Mr. Cooper sent in a form of penance by Mr. Wakefield, of Deddington, that Catherine King should do penance in the parish Church of North Aston on the sixth day of March, 1740, and accordingly she did.' But from the same record it appears that another

person who had become a mother before she was made a wife left the parish to avoid doing public penance.

But not infrequently those convicted of creating a public scandal in the parish tried, as far as possible, to evade punishment, and accordingly an entry in the Grindon registers, dated May 23, 1725, runs thus: 'By virtue of a mandate from the Bishop's Court, James Meakin, Jun^{r} was excommunicated for contempt of the said Court, he being charged with fornication and not appearing to answer the Charge.' But five years afterwards he appears to have been in a better frame of mind, for another entry, dated May 19, 1730, informs us that 'James Meakin, Jun^{r} did penance in this Church and was thereby restored to the Communion of the Church, pursuant to a mandate, and absolution taken out of the Bishop's Court, dated April 23rd 1730.'

Similarly, two young women, as appears from the parish register of Wadhurst, acted in a like manner: '1677. July 16th Eleonora Woodgate et Sarah Moore in Ecclesiâ Parochiali inter Divinorum solemnia palam publice et solemniter denunciatæ et declaratæ fuerunt pro excommunicatis.'

'April 5th Eleonora Woodgate et Sarah Moore in Ecclesia Parochiali inter Divinorum solemnia palam publice et solemniter pœnitentiam agebant.'

In the eighteenth century, penance for immorality was of frequent occurrence, and instances are noticed in most old parish documents, a form of public penance for offenders guilty of fornica-

tion being preserved in the register of Dalton-le-Dale. At Roxby, Lincolnshire, 'Michael Kirby and Dixon Wid had two bastard children, one in 1725, y^e^ other in 1727, for which they did publick Penance in our Parish Church, Feb. 25. 1727 for Adultery;' and on November 25, 1717, at Sutton Vallence, Kent, the register tells how 'Elizabeth Stace did public penance for y^e^ foul sin of adultery committed with Tho^s^ Hutchins, Jun^r^, in Sutton Vallence Church, as did Anne Hynds for y^e^ foul sin of fornication committed with Tho^s^ Daws.'

But for a lesser offence than adultery it would seem that a person was required to do penance, as may be gathered from the parish-books of the parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, in the city of London (1538-1760). One entry, for instance, is to this effect: 'Item, payd a certyficate of penaunce done by Sheppards wyfe and the powlter for openinge there wyndowes one the Sabbath daie (1590) sixteen pence.' And in some cases the excommunication of persons for only trivial offences is noticed in our parish records—an evidence of the severity of Church discipline in bygone times. An entry in the register of Quorndon, Leicestershire, records 'an excommunication against Anne Turlington, the wife of Thomas Turlington, in not sending an inventory by order of the Ecclesiastical Court in Leicester;' and the register of Shoreditch records how, on June 7, 1619, 'John Edwards, being excommunicated, was buried the 7 June in the King's high-waie in Hollywell Laine near the Curtaine.'

And among further instances of excommunication may be quoted two or three cases entered in the register of Stokesley, from which we learn that 'Nicholas Mewburn, of Stokesley, weaver, was excommunicated the 3[d] day of February, 1744-5, for refusing to pay his Easter offerings to the minister.' On February 22, 1746, May Wemes was excommunicated for fornication; and on November 15, 1747, Clara Johnson was excommunicated for contumacy of the Consistory Court of St. Peter's, York, in a cause of slander or defamation with John Heath, of Whitby, gentleman. And on a flyleaf at the end of one of the Aldbrough registers, Yorkshire, there is a memorandum to the effect that, in the year 1634, by order of Dr. Easdall, Michael Gilbert, the Vicar, excommunicnted about fifty persons. And again in the year 1663 he excommunicated about thirty more by the order of Dr. Burwell. In both instances the names are given in full. And then comes the following:

'Mr. Gilbert. If any recusant being excommunicated shall be buryed in any place but in Church or Churchyard, his executors shall forfitt thirtie Pounds by Statute, therefore I conceive you ought to burie him, but let it be accordinge to the forme of the Churche of England, these directions were sent under Dr. Burwell's own hand, Aug. 18, 1643, when Sir Thomas Tanckred was to be buried. Thomas Burwell.'



CHAPTER VI.

BIRTH AND BAPTISM.

THE representative character of the parish register is one of its most remarkable features, for on its pages are enrolled, side by side, the names of the high and low, rich and poor, without distinction. It has been aptly described as the 'World's Great Roll,' for, as some lines in a Shropshire register tell us :

> 'No flattery here, where to be born and die
> Of rich and poor is all the history ;
> Enough, if virtue fill'd the space between—
> Prov'd, by the ends of being, to have been.'

And Lord Eldon once remarked that, 'while the rich had their title-deeds, their parchments, and their sculptured monuments, there was literally no record of the poor man's birth or death except the parish register, which might not inaptly be called the Charter of the Poor Man.'*

But apart from the mere registration of names, much curious information is incidentally given,

* Hansard, cxxxii. 576.

illustrative of the domestic life and manners of the past. Oftentimes the entry indicates, in a striking manner, a story of sin or romance connected with the child's birth, and in a few graphic words is registered the most quaint piece of biography, as in the following baptismal entry in the register of Chute, Wiltshire, dated August 8, 1606: 'Willam, the sonne of Mary Potinger, a gentlewoman of Edward Clifford, of Boscombe, which was delivered in the house of Richard Gale, and who saith that Edward Clifford the sonne of the saide Edward, is the childes father.' Some of the strangest entries are those relating to illegitimate children, being described in such terms as 'love-begotten,' 'a merry-begott,' 'a bye-blow,' or 'a scape-begotten child.' The term 'bastard,' 'base-born,' or 'unlawfully begotten,' is very common, and occasionally the words 'child of an harlot' occur. In the register of Attenborough cum Bramscote, Nottinghamshire, we read how 'upon Sonday the xviiith of November a^{o} 1560, was born Joan y^{e} infant of Dorithie begotten in fornication, christened at home by reason of weakness.' And from the Rochdale register we gather that the illegitimacy of children was regularly recorded, and in a few cases a memorandum is added that 'penance was done.' Equally curious are the circumstances entered relating to births of this kind, as in the following from the Stepney register: 'Oct. 22, 1633. Alexander, son of Katherine, wife of Alexander Tucky of Poplar, begotten she affirmed in the field on this side the mud wall near the Gunne, about nine of

the clock at night; the father she knew not, but the said Alexander by them that brought the child to be baptized, requested that it might be recorded in his name.'

The term 'Children of God' or 'Creatura Christi' was also applied to illegitimate children, but the phrase would seem also to have been applied in the sixteenth century to infants baptized by the midwife, as in the parish register of Staplehurst, Kent: '1547. Ther was baptized by the mid-wyffe, and so buried, the childe of Thomas Goldham, called creature.' And in 'Piers Plowman' we find the word used:

> 'I conjured him at the laste
> If he were Cristes Creature
> Anoon me to tellen.
> "I am Cristes Creature," quod he;
> "In Cristes Court by knowe wel,
> And of his kyn a party."'

Occasionally such children lived to be married, as another entry in Staplehurst register shows: '1579. July 19. Marryed John Haffynden, and Creature Cheseman, young folke.'

Connected with the births of illegitimate children, may be noticed the oftentimes pathetic and sad entries relating to foundlings, the naming of whom, at times, sorely taxed our forefathers. But one way out of the difficulty was to give the child the name of the parish in which it was found; and by the Temple register it appears that from the year 1728 to 1755 as many as 104 foundlings were christened there, all of whom were named Temple or Templer. And from the register of

St. Lawrence, Old Jewry, we find that the name of Lawrence has invariably been given to foundlings in that parish. Only too often, however, foundlings seem to have been named in a haphazard manner, as baptismal entries like the subjoined, in the register of St. Dunstan's, London, show:

'1618. Mary Porch, a foundling, bapt. 18 Jan^ry.'

'1631. Eliz. Middlesex, found in Chancery Lane.'

And in the register of St. Gregory's, by St. Paul's, we read of 'Moyses and Aaron, two children found in the street, 28th December, 1629.'

In the register of St. Dionis Backchurch, under December 14, 1567, this entry occurs:

'A chylde that was fownd at the strangers dore in lymstrete, whych chylde was fownde on Saynt petters day in An° d'ni 1567, and fonde of the p'ishe coste, wherefore they named the chylde by the day that he was fownd, & syrname by the p'ishe, so the chyldes name ys Petter Dennis.'

And in the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, there is, in the year 1675, an entry recording the baptism of 'one left in ye parish,' and she was baptized by the name of Mary. Two godfathers and two godmothers 'stood' for the child, but as her parents were unknown, she appears without a surname. But in after-years she appears to have acquired one, for in the year 1698 we find one 'Marie Magdalen' was buried.

Most readers, too, are familiar with Sir Richard Monday, who died at Monday Place, in Crabbe's amusing poem of 'The Parish Register':

'To name an infant, met our village sires,
Assembled all, as such events requires.
Frequent and full the rural sages sate,
And speakers many urged the long debate.
Some harden'd knave, who rov'd the country round,
Had left a babe within the parish bound.
First, of the fact they questioned, "Was it true?"
The child was brought—what then remained to do?
"Was't dead or living?" This was fairly proved,
'Twas pinched—it roar'd—and every doubt remov'd.
Then by what name th' unwelcome guest to call
Was long a question, and it pos'd them all.
For he who lent a name to babe unknown,
Censorious men might take it for his own.
They look'd about, they ask'd the name of all,
And not one Richard answer'd to the call.
Next they inquir'd the day, when, passing by,
Th' unlucky peasant heard the stranger cry;
This known, how food and raiment they might give
Was next debated, for the rogue would live;
At last, with all their words and works content,
Back to their homes the prudent vestry went,
And Richard Monday to the workhouse sent.
Long lost to us, our man at last we trace,
Sir Richard Monday died at Monday Place.'

Although many of these poor children did not long survive their baptism, yet it is fair to presume that some became founders of families, for, as it has been pointed out by Mr. Nicholls, the surname of Dunstan is found in numerous entries in St. Dunstan's register—among others, Thomas Dunstan, Pater of the Rolls, buried 1603—and still remains in the parish.

To quote further cases in the register of St. Peter's, Cornhill, there are entries of a vast number of foundlings, who, according to a common custom, were all surnamed Peter, after the saint to whom

the parish church was dedicated; one of them bears the name of Symon Peter.*

And the following entry is from the transcripts of St. Mary's, Dover:

'July 24, 1718. Susanna daughter of Francis and Margaret Hamilton: this poor woman's maiden name is Margaret Brown: her child-birth pains fell upon her at the half-way-house betwixt this and Canterburie, and she brought her child here to my house and I christen'd it. She herself [and] her ancient father and mother are going to Francis Hamilton in New England, where they say he is settl'd in a plantation left him by his deceased brother who lived there.'

And in the registers of St. Antholin, London, under January 8, 1618, this quaint entry occurs:

'Margery dau to William Semer, his wife or quene a vagrant came out from turnebull Street, & thether went againe, till hir belly bee full, shee was delivered at Mrs. Smith's doore one Christmas day, her child was chr 8.'

It is remarkable that, during the four years from 1758 to 1761 inclusive, there are about fifty entries of burials of foundlings in the Twickenham register, from which it has been inferred that either a foundling hospital must have existed in the neighbourhood at that time, or that the exposure of infants upon the unenclosed lands hereabouts must have been frightfully common. But the former conjecture, perhaps, is the more probable, especially as several interments occur in previous

* 'Registers of St. Peter's, Cornhill' (Harleian Society), 1877. Preface, xiii.

years, being described as 'from y^e^ Foundling Hospital.'* And a correspondent of *Notes and Queries* baptized a child Benjamin Simon Jude. On expressing some surprise at the strange conjunction, he was informed that the child was born on the festival of St. Simon and St. Jude, and that it was always considered very unlucky to take the day from the child.

Among further entries of a similar kind in the registers of St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, under February 13, 1634, this curious one occurs: 'Margaret, sup' d [supposed daughter] to Richard Richardson. Suerties. Charles Robson, Margaret Thompson and Margaret Maddison. It was borne under a wayne before Richard Aplbyes dore in a morning in a sore frost and snaw it came of a sudan to us or ells it had p'ished, and wee knew not whence it so wee had nothing.' And a memorandum in Kensington register records how 'a woman child, of the age of one year and a half or thereabouts, being found in her swadlinge clothes, layed at the Ladye Cooper's gate, baptized by the name of Mary Troovie, 10^th^ October.'

Comical mistakes in the naming of children often seem to have occurred—in most cases made by the parents, and afterwards laid by some of them to the parson's charge. In the register of St. Nicholas' Church, Great Yarmouth, we learn that on December 21, 1818, a child was baptized as Susannah Drury B——, the following note being subsequently added: 'By mistake of the father baptized as a girl—rebaptized Jan^y^ 5, 1819,

* Cobbett's 'Memorials of Twickenham,' p. 69.

when the names given were Richard Drury B——.' But it is not surprising that mistakes of this kind occasionally happened, for it appears a custom prevailed in Great Yarmouth at the end of the last and commencement of the present century to send the nurse with the infant to the parsonage, a day or two after its birth, sometimes on the very day it saw the light, to have it baptized. One shilling was paid, ostensibly for the trouble of making the entry in the register-book. This shilling was not unfrequently a source of temptation to the bearer, preventing her from reaching the parsonage, and the infant from receiving baptism. Baptism was then, we are told, very seldom administered in the church, the parson requiring a fee of two shillings and sixpence for each child for public baptism in church on a week-day.* And in 'Exactions of Parish Fees Discovered,' by Francis Sadler (1738, p. 54), it is recorded how in Battersea their late clerk had been detected registering boys for girls and girls for boys, and 'not one half of the register-book, in his time, was correct and authentic, as it ought to be.'

But among baptismal blunders in other parishes we find this strange entry in the register of burials belonging to Bishop Wearmouth, Durham: 'Robert, daughter of William Thompson, bap. 15 Feb. 1730, the midwife mistaking the sex, ebrietas dementat'; and an entry in the register of Hanwell, Middlesex, tells how 'Thomas, son of Thomas Messenger and Elizabeth his wife, was

* 'St. Nicholas' Church, Great Yarmouth,' Edward J. Lupson, pp. 132, 133.

born and baptized Oct. 24, 1731, by the midwife at the Font, called a boy, and named by the godfather, Thomas, but proved a girl!' Careless blunders of this kind were, indeed, of common occurrence, and often gave rise to serious complications. It must be remembered that in former years, if there was any likelihood of the child dying before a priest could be procured, the midwife was bound to baptize it, and curates were enjoined 'to instruct midwives openly in the Church in the words and very form of baptism, to the intent that they may use them perfectly, and none other.'

In the sixteenth century it was not uncommon for two or three members of a family to bear the same name, and the following extract from the register of Beby, Leicestershire, is an example of a custom which must have caused endless confusion in large families:

'1559. Item. 29th day of August was John and John Sicke, the children of Christopher and Anne, baptized.'

'Item. The 31st day of August the same John and John were buried.'

Again, in the register of Maresfield, Sussex, there are cases of lay baptism performed by the minister's wife, a midwife, and a layman; and under the year 1579 this entry occurs:

'Was baptized Joan Birmingham, the daughter of John Birmingham, and Joan his wife, by the midwife at home, and it was buried on the 20th day.

'Thomas Rofe baptized by Mr. Clipper of Marshalls.'

The register, too, of Horstead Keynes records a baptism in which the ceremony was performed by a 'Mr. Griffin, a person unknowne.'

The disturbed state also of politics in the seventeenth century gave rise to many irregularities in baptisms, as entries like the following from the register of Lowestoft show: 'During the Commonwealth, and the Restoration of Charles II., no entries were made in the Parish Register.' The Rev. Jacob Rous, then Vicar, writes that on March 14, 1643, himself, with many others, was carried prisoner by Colonel Cromwell to Cambridge; so that for some time following there was neither minister nor clerk in this town, but the inhabitants were obliged to procure one another to baptize their children, by which means, he adds, there was no register kept. 'Only a few were by myself baptized in those intervals when I enjoyed my freedom.'

And in the register of Horley for the year 1649 there is a leaf inserted with this heading: 'These that are regestred in this leaf were not regestred at the time of their birth, but were regestred by the directione of ther parentes by me Henry Shove sworne regester for horley.'

From the year 1586 up to the commencement of the seventeenth century there are repeated entries in the registers of SS. Peter and Paul, Mitcham, of 'nurse children,' and in one instance such a child is described as from 'drewes nursery'; and under March 25, 1595, this entry is given: 'francis Tailor a Commō keeper of children was buried,' after which date the baby-farming in

these parishes seems to have gradually ceased.* Similar entries occur in the Petersham registers. Thus, on June 21, 1669: 'Eleezabeth Gardner a nurse Child of Goody Tanners was buried'; and in August of the same year a further entry tells how 'Another Nurse Child of Goody Tanners was buried.' The early registers of Limpsfield, Surrey, 'every year, on the average, record the burial of a nurse child'; and if, as Mr. Alfred Heales writes,† entries such as '1558, May 18, buried Lucas, a Londoner's Child kept by Henry Wells,' mean the same thing, there would probably be at least three buried every year, a very large number in proportion to the small population of the parish.

An entry in Greystoke registers, April 13, 159$\frac{2}{3}$, records the burial of a child of 'a Spayner at Whylbarrow,' this 'spayner' being probably a person to whom children were sent to be weaned. In the Yorkshire dialect we find 'to spane' used for 'to wean,' and in modern Cumbrian the word takes the form 'speann.' Burns used the word in this sense in his 'Tam o' Shanter':

> 'But withered beldams, auld and droll,
> Ringwoodie hags wad spean a foal.'

Baptized infants, who died within the month after their baptism, were generally shrouded in the white cloth—'chrisom'—put on the head at baptism, and on this account they were called 'chrisoms.' But although the chrisom was expunged from the Prayer-Book of 1552, the

* See *Reliquary*, vol. xviii., p. 4.

† 'Surrey Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., p. 245.

memory of it long lingered in the hearts of the people, and down to the eighteenth century babes dying in their innocence were styled chrisoms in the bills of mortality and in parish registers. Under the year 1687, this entry occurs in the register of Westminster Abbey: 'The Princess Ann's Child, a Chrisome bur. 22 Oct.,' a practice reminding us of Keble's beautiful words in his 'Lyra Innocentium':

> 'Radiant may be her glance of mirth,
> Who wears her chrisom vest,
> Pure, as when first at her new birth
> It wrapt her tender breast.'

And it may be remembered that in 'Henry V.,' when the death of Falstaff is announced, Mrs. Quickly replies:

'Nay, sure, he's not in hell: he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom. A' made a finer end and went away an it had been any christom child.'

Bishop Taylor, too, in his 'Holy Living,' makes use of the word in the following beautiful passage: 'This day is mine and yours, but ye know not what shall be on the morrow; and every morning creeps out of a dark cloud, leaving behind it an ignorance and silence, deep as midnight, and undiscerned as are the phantasms that make a chrisome child to smile.'* In the register of Richmond, Surrey, as in most others, there are several entries of chrisom children. Under August 24, 1626, the burial of 'a Chrisom Child

* A full account of 'Chrisom Child,' by Thomas George Norris, will be found in the Exeter Diocesan Society Publications, 1847.

of Reynald Ashen'* is recorded; and under December 7, 1636, that of 'a Crisome of Mr. Best, of Kew.' Under March 12, 1650, this entry is given: 'A Chrisome of Sir Harbar Lunsons buried.' Among further instances of this custom, we read in Limpsfield register, under May 29, 1629, that 'a Chrysome of Mr. Thomas Greshame' was buried. And the register of Bletchingley, under the year 1596, states that 'two Chrisomars of Roger Combers, Wm. and Solomon, was buried the xxv of September.'

In the register of Maresfield, Sussex, a very interesting entry occurs connected with the mode of baptizing children: '1644. Baptized Ursula Morgan, the first child baptized after the new fashion.'† The old custom of baptism was by immersion, but aspersion, or sprinkling, was allowed if the child happened to be weak, and the practice of administering the Sacrament of Baptism in this way 'was gradually introduced by our divines, when they returned from the Continent in Queen Elizabeth's reign. During the latter part of her reign and those of James I. and Charles I. very few children were dipped at the font. After the Restoration the old practice was again gradually introduced, which is probably that alluded to above.' In the parish register of Hillingdon, Middlesex, there is this curious entry: 'Baptized, Elizabeth, the daughter

* See 'Surrey Archæological Collections,' vol. ii., pp. 85-88, and 'London and Middlesex Archæological Society,' vol. ii., p. 211.

† 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., p. 256.

of William Pratt, Feb. 25th, 1671; the first that in eleven years was baptized with water in the font, which I never could get reformed, till I had gotten a new Clerk, John Brown, who presently did what I appointed to be done.'

Incidental allusions to the many superstitions connected with birth are occasionally noticed, as in the register of Blendworth, Hunts, where this memorandum is chronicled: 'John, the Son of John Lutman ye younger, and of Priscilla his wife, was born about three of ye Clock in the morning, and bapt. ye 12th of the same, *pileum naturale*, that is, a certain film or skin like a cap, a thing not common.' According to an old piece of folk-lore, which was prevalent as far back as the days of the Roman Empire, *a caul* was considered not only a highly propitious omen for the child itself, indicative of its good fortune in years to come, but, as a talisman, was supposed to preserve the purchaser in the hour of danger. Hence it was always popular with sailors, who oftentimes paid large sums to possess this mystic charm. The will of Sir John Offley, Knight, of Madeley Manor, Staffordshire, proved at Doctors' Commons May 20, 1658, contains this singular bequest:

'Item, I will and devise one jewell, done all in gold and enamelled, wherein there is a caul that covered my face and shoulders, when I came into the world, the use thereof to my loving daughter, the Lady Elizabeth Jenny, so long as she shall live; and after her decease the use likewise to her son, Offley Jenny, during his natural life; and after his decease, to my own right male heirs for

ever ; and so, from heir to heir, to be left so long as it shall please God of His goodness to continue any Heir male of my name, desiring that the same jewell be not conceded nor sold by any of them.'

The custom, again, of naming the day and hour of birth is often duly chronicled, in order to give facility to the astrologer in 'casting a nativity' or telling the future fortune of a child, should it be desired. At the close of the register of the chapelry of Stretford such entries are to be found, and in that of Hawstead, Suffolk, it is stated that 'M^r^ Robert Drury, the first sonne of Mr. William Drury, Esq^re^, was born 30 Jan betwixt four and five of the Clock in the morning, the sunne in Libra, anno 1574, at Durham House, within the parish of Westminster.'

In illustration of this practice may be quoted another entry from Eaton register, Rutlandshire :

'1586. Mr. Henry Hastings, Son and Heir of Mr. Francis Hastings, was born on St. Mark's Even, April 24, between the hours of ten and eleven of the clock at night, Sign Sagit: Secund: die pleni lunii Marte in Taurum intrato die precedente ; and was christened May 17.'

And in the register of Carshalton, Surrey, under the year 1609, this memorandum is given :

'Henry Burton, the son of M^r^ Henry Burton, knight of the honorable Order of the bath was borne the first day of November 1609 about seaven of the Clocke at night, and baptized the Twelft day of the same month.'

And to give one further case, there is this very full entry in the register of St. Edmund's, Dudley :

'1539. Samuell, son of Sir William Smithe Clarke, Vicare of Duddly, was born on Friday morninge, at 4 of the Clock, being the xxviij day of February, the signe of that day was the middle of aquaris ♒ ; the signe of the monthe ♓ ; the plenet of that day ♀ ; plenet of the same ower ☿ and the morow day whose name hath continued in Duddly from the Conqueste.'

Occasionally the parson has embellished his register with poetical effusions, and in the early part of the register of Ockley, Surrey—which dates from 1539—the Vicar, William Margesson, has transcribed the following old lines, which it is suggested, probably are not original, except in the spelling:

'The new born infant in the cradle lies, and when it sleeps not, fills
Our ears with cries. Being grown big with foolish spoorts (*sic*) and play,
The first ten years of life are thrown away; yet he Injoyes
Till those ten years are over, That Innocence (*sic*) which he must boast no more.
Poor man when Three Score Winters he has told now places all his hops (*sic*) in
Bags of Gold.'

And in the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, will be found, under the years 1763, 1764, and 1772, mention of three children who were 'born in the fore part of the house.' The families referred to lived most likely on the northern side of Burgate Street. The houses, it is said, stand on the boundary dividing the parish of St. Mary Magdalene, on the south, from the ville of Christ Church—the precincts of the cathedral

—on the north. A child born 'in the fore part' of the house would be born within the city liberties, and would become a 'freeman'; but it born in the back part of the house, or over the border, it would not be 'free.' Hence the importance of distinguishing in which part of the house a child was born.*

Cases of petty tyranny have occasionally met with deserved rebuke by being made public for all time. A memorandum, for instance, in the Wimbledon register, bearing the date of 1723, is as follows:

'Susannah, daughter of Moses and Mary Cooper, Travellers, born in Martin [Merton], and the poor woman being desirous to have it baptized, though she had lain in but a week, carried it in her own arms to Martin Church, to tender it to me to Baptize it there on Sunday last, being June y^e^ 30^th^. But Justice Meriton being informed by the Constable of her being in the Porch with that intention, went out of his seat in time of service to her, and took hold of her, and led her to the Court of his house, being over against the Church, and shut the gate upon her and her husband, and let them not out till sermon and service were over and I was gone home, and made the man's mittimus to send him to the house of correction if he would not cary his wife and child out of the parish without being Baptized, and consequently registered there, which being forced to comply with, she brought up her child

* 'Registers of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury,' J. M. Cowper. Introduction, ix.

to me, to my house on this day, being Tuesday, July 2nd, complaining of her hard usage, and passionately desiring me to Baptize it, which I did by the name above in the presence of her husband, my wife, and Dr Elir Pitchford. 1723. Edward Collins.'



CHAPTER VII.

MARRIAGE.

AS an evidence of the altered state of things after the Reformation, may be quoted the following extract from the register of Croydon: '1551, Oct. 25. Reverend patr Jhoês Êpus Wynton duxit Mariā Hammond generosa in ista Ecclesia Coram multitudine pōchianos psente Revēndissimo pre Thoma Cantuar Archiepo cu multis.' This is a singular entry, for, as it has been observed, 'the marriage of a bishop who had himself, in 1549, written a defence of the marriage of priests,' and the presence, too, of Cranmer, now twice married, and the words 'cum multitudine' and 'cum multis,' are no insignificant signs of the times. Only some twenty years previously poor Skelton, Poet Laureate, and Rector of Diss, was found guilty of keeping a concubine, then a far less crime for a parson than marriage. On his death-bed the poet declared that he had kept her as his mistress because he could not marry her, and they had as religiously kept the marriage as

though they had been joined man and wife by the Church.

It is further added that 'nearly all the clergy were open to the same charge. But the time was at hand when men were to be freed from that forced asceticism which is ever the parent of debauchery.' The clergy, it seems, were very careful in duly entering the ceremony, lest the validity might at any time be questioned, as the subjoined entry in the register of Staplehurst, Kent, shows:

'1549. The ninth day of June, being Whitsunday (wherein the booke of the Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Ceremonies and rites of the Churche, after the use of the Church of England, began to be executed), there was baptized Marie, the daughter of Richarde, parsone of this parish churche, born the last Thursday, of his lawful wife Jane, who were married the yeare before, and in the first day that the holy Communion, in the English tongue (after the order that now is), was then ministered; they both with others, most humblie and devoutlie communicating the same. The parsone christened his own childe.' The words 'lawful wife' have a significant meaning, for 'in those days men's opinions were much divided as to the lawfulness of a priest's marrying, and the power to do so was reluctantly given by the legislature; and those priests who married took special care to declare their right to do so.'*

During Cromwell's Protectorate, the Little

* 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., pp. 246, 247.

Parliament of the year 1653 declared that marriage was to be merely a civil contract. Accordingly, it was enacted that the names of parties intending to be married were to be proclaimed either in church after morning service on three successive Sundays, or in the market-place on three successive market-days, according to the wish of the parties. The proclamation was usually made in the market-place by the bellman, and as an example of the operation of this new marriage law, it may be mentioned that the parish registers of Boston, Lincolnshire, show that during the years 1656, 1657 and 1658, respectively, the numbers of marriages proclaimed in the market-place were 102, 104 and 108, and of those announced in church, 48, 31 and 52.

Cerne register contains entries of the banns proclaimed in the open market-place. One of them certifies that a couple, after the banns had been three times published in the market-place, and there being no opposition, were, with the consent of their parents, married at Alton Pancras on May 7, 1665. This was signed by a justice of the peace.

In the register of Acton this entry occurs:

'Thursday the 5th of Aprill, 1655. Richard Meredith Esquire eldest son of Sr William Meredith of Leedes in the County of Kent Baronet was marryed unto Ms Susanna Skippen youngest daughter to right honourable Major General Skippen [Traytor] by St John Thoroughgood [knave] in the publick congregation within the Parish Church in Acton in the County of Middlesex Mr Philip Nye at the same time praying and Teaching upon that occasion.'

The words 'Traytor' and 'knave'—here placed in brackets—were inserted by Dr. Bruno Ryves, who came in as Rector after the Commonwealth.

But there are in the register of Maidstone, Kent, memoranda of two exceptions to marriages, one of which is as follows:

'Abraham Hawkes, of East Farleigh, servant to Thomas Scultup of the same Free Mason, and Mary Emoett of Boughton Monchalsey, was published in the market-place in Maidstone upon May 4th, the 11th, and the 18th 1654. See an exception page ye 8th.'

'Page 8. Lambard Godfrey Esqre doth make exception to the proceedinge of the marriage of Abraham Hawkes and Mary Emyott, for that the said Mary Emyott doth seem to be not of competent understanding to dispose of herself in marriage.'

'The exception made by Lābert Godfrey Esqre against the proceeding to marriage of Abraham Hawkes and Mary Emeot above said being heard before Lambert Godfrey aforesaid, George Duke Richard Beale Esqres and Justices of the Peace of this County, is satisfied and discharged, and the marriage of the said Abraham Hawkes and Mary Emeot aforesd was solemnized before the Justices aforesaid the sixth day of July, 1654.'

But we must not omit to quote a curious and amusing case of breach of promise noted in the register of Malmesbury, Wiltshire, in which the banns were forbidden, although, it seems, the parties were married afterwards. The memorandum gives the facts thus:

'William Waite of Malmesbury, mercer, and Mary Hobbes of Malmesbury, Spinster, had their purpose of marriage lawfully published at the Market Cross in Malmesbury, 3 market dayes, viz.—June 13th, June 20th, & June 27th 1657, the said William then living of himself and being at his own dispose, but being the sonn of Edmond and Margaret Waite of Malmesbury, and Mary being the daughter of Anne, then the wife of Mr Hasell, of Cawne, in the Countie of Wiltes, but the said Mary then living with her uncle, Mr Henery Greyle, of Malmesbury, Clothier. Some contradiction there was at the time of publicōn, which was as followeth: the first time the parties were published, there was noe interruption made, but the second day Mr Gawen published them, and having beene out of towne, yet returning in due time, and not knowing that Mr Gawen had made a publication, I again published their purpose of marriage, at which time Thomas Webbe of Malmesbury, glover, or barber, delivered a paper into my hands at the Market Crosse in the behalfe of Alice Webbe his sister, by way of contradiction to the said publication, which paper I read at that very instant on the Markett Crosse, where I made the publication. A coppie of the said contents here followeth, worde by worde:

'"Mr Harper, I Alce Webb doe heare that you have published Willim Waite and Mary Hobbes in our Markett. I forbid the publicatn ontell hee hath given mee satisfaction. In witness whereof I sett my hand the 20th June 1657:

'"The Mark X of Alce Webb."

'The weeke following Mr George Joyce and Will Shute, both Justices of the Peace, mett at the White Lion in Malmesbury, and desyring to make an end of the differences, sent for the parties, viz. William Waite and Alice Webbe, and heard the whole business debated, Mr Edmond Waite, John Goldney, Richard and Robert Webbe being then present, but noe end could be made. I asked the Justices whether the exception put in by Alice Webbe was sufficient to hinder Will Waites proceedings or noe, they answered, it was not sufficient, for that the said Alice had not inserted any cause in p'ticular in that deniel of hers; whereupon I proceeded to publish the said Will. and Mary, the last time being June 27 1657, at wh time of publication, Richard Webbe of Malmsbury, brother to the said Alice, in the behalfe of his said sister, delivered mee a note to be read at the same place forbidding the said publication; this was done in the p'sence of Richard Goffe, Thomas Waters, Tho Baker, Robert Fry and many others. A true coppie of the note here followeth:

'"Mr Robert Harper, I Alce Webb of Malmesbury, in the count of Wiltes, doe forbid the publicatn of marridge between Will. Waite and Mary Hobbes, by reason that Will Waight is my lawful husband by pr'mise. Witness my hand the 26 June, 1657.

'"The Mark X of Alce Webb."

'Hereupon Will Waite, by the advice of Simon Gawen, summoned Alice Webb to appear at the Quarter Sessions, held at Warminster, but shee

not being well went not in p'son, onely her brother went in her behalfe, the business was fully debated in open Courts, and Lawes pleaded on both sides, but she not being there in p'son, the Sessions granted an Order for Mr Waite to marrye any other p'son. A coppie of the order here followeth :

'"Wilts &c. At the General Quarter Sessions of the publique peace of the Countie aforesaid, holden at Warminster in the same Countie, the first day of July, in the year of our Lord God 1657—

'"Upon hearing the differences, and upon examination of witnesses about the claime of contracte of marriage, between William Waite of Malmesbury, mercer, and Alice Webb of the same place, spinster, the Justices of Peace at the p'sent Sessions assembled, doe adjudge and declare that the same clayme is not lawful contract, and that the said Will. Waite is at liberty to marry any other woman."

'Hereupon Will. Waite and Mary Hobbes aforesaid were marryed by M^r^ Edmund Hobbes of Westport, Deputy Alderman of the burrough of Malmesbury, July 5, 1657, in the p'sence of M^r^ Abia Qui, M^rs^ Malxplace Qui, M^ris^ Grayce, Henery Davis and M^r^ Gawen.'

By the same Act, marriages were not to be performed by the parson, but by the justices of the peace, a noted illustration of which revolutionary change is the entry of the marriage of Cromwell's daughter in the register of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields :

'November 11^th^, 1657. These are to Certifie

whom it may concerne that, according to the late Act of Parliament, entuytled an Act touching marriages, and the registering thereof etc. Publication was made in the publique meeting-place, in the Parish Church of the Parish of Martins in the Fields in the County of Middlesex, upon three several Lord's Days, at the Close of the morning exercise, namely, upon the xxv day of October MDCLVII, as also upon the i and viii day of November following, of a marriage agreed upon between the Honble Robert Rich of Andrew's Holborne, and the Right Honorable the Lady Frances Cromwell, of Martins in the Fields in the County of Middlesex. All which was fully performed according to the Act, without exception.'

And a further entry adds that they were 'Married xi. November, MDCLVII, in the presence of his highness the Lord Protector, the Right Honble the Earls of Warwick and Newport—Robert Rich and Mountjoy Blount—the Lord Strickland, and many others.'

This form of marriage ceremony is further exemplified in Elvetham register, Hants, where this record is given:

'1654, I, A. B. do here in the presence of God, the searcher of all hearts, take thee C. D. for my wedded wife, and doe, also, in the presence of God, promise unto thee to be a loving and a faithful husband. Thomas Patrick of Hartley Witney, and Lucie Watts of Elvetham, were married before Robert Reynolds Esqre in the presence of Ambrose Iver and Thomas Townsend. March 16th, 1654, Robert Reynolds, Justice of the Peace.'

And the ordinary certificate of a civil marriage was like the subjoined one, which occurs in the register of Billingborough, Lincolnshire :

'1653-4. Feby 2nd. Mr. Richard Toller, of Billinghborough, in the Countie of Lincoln, was married at Willowbee before Master Walley, Justice of the Peace for the said Countie, unto Mrs. Elizabeth Brown, of Saltfleetby, Spinster, according to the Act of Parliament dated the 24th Augst whereon I did declare them to be man and wife.' As in Limpsfield register, where a similar certificate is given, the entry often adds, 'none gainsaying,' a statement usually attested by the parish clerk.

As a further proof of the easy manner in which marriages were performed in the time of the Commonwealth, it appears from the following extracts, taken from the register of Wartling, that some regiment was quartered there in the year 1656, and that the officers officiated as the priests of Hymen:

'April 24th. Roger Harrison and Elizabeth Pettit married. They were married by Captaine Jenner.'

On June 19 'William Faulkner and Mary Elizabeth Ainscombe were married by Colonel John Rusbridge and by Mr. Paul Durande at Mayfield.'

And on July 1 'David Hart and Ceselie Hammond were married by Capitaine Stapley.'*

These civil marriages during the Commonwealth seem greatly to have exercised the mind of

* 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., p. 287.

the Vicar of Aldborough, Yorkshire, who, under 'Marriages,' made this memorandum on the subject:

'From the year 1653 till 1656 which were made by Cromwel's justices of the Peace—y^{t} impious and Rebell . . . appointed out of the basest Hypocrites and dissemblers with God and man—the manner of whose certificates, that they might appear to after ages I do here register, one from Tho Dickinson, whom Cromwel made believe he had knighted—viz: according to a certificate written, attested by the Parish Registers with others: the s^{d} W^{m} Dove and Eliz: Clementshaw both of the town and Parish of Aldburgh Came this day before me M^{r} S^{re} Thomas Dickinson Esquire, one of the Justices of the Peace within the West Riding of the county of York, and declared their desire and consente to proceed in marriage according to the Act in that behalf provided, whereupon the said W^{m} Dove did take for his wife the said Eliz Clementshaw, and the said Elizabeth Clementshaw did take for her wedded husband Wil^{m} Dove with consent of Parents before me, and in the Presence of Wil^{m} Burnand, Thos. Cotton, Edw: Thompson, Nicholas Smithson, these witnesses on the seventh day of Feb in the year of 1653.' The good Vicar adds that 'Many would not be so marryed, and such for the most part as were so marryed, were also marryed in their own Parish Churches by their ministers.'

It appears, also, that a strong feeling of discontent arose in consequence of the Church marriage

ceremony being regarded invalid; and, by a kind of compromise, it became customary for marriages to be solemnized before the Mayor and minister of the parish conjointly. Some idea of what the clergy felt at this violation of the Church's sacred rite may be gathered from an entry made by the parson in Elwick register, Durham: 'Maryinge by justices, election of registers by parishioners, and the use of ruling elders, first came into fashion in the time of the Rebellion under that monster of nature and bludy tyrant, Oliver Cromwell.' And a further strange abuse is mentioned by Burn, who says that 'the marriages in the Parish of Dale Abbey were, till a few years previous to the Marriage Act, solemnized by the Clerk of the parish, at one shilling each, there being no minister.'

Turning from the civil to the clerical side of the marriage ceremony, it would appear that in olden times the discipline of the Church was somewhat severe, marriages having been prohibited during Advent, Lent, and Whitsuntide, as the following lines—of which there are more than one version—in the register of Everton, Notts, show:

> 'Advent marriages doth deny,
> But Hilary gives the liberty;
> Septuagesima says thee nay,
> Eight days from Easter says you may;
> Rogation bids thee to contain,
> But Trinity sets thee free again.'

And in a register belonging to Cottenham, this direction is given as to when matrimony should be solemnized:

'Conjugiu Adventus phibet, Hilariq relaxat ;
Septuagena vetat, sed paschæ octava remittet,
Rogamen vetitat, concedit Trina potestas.'

Many of the old almanacks give directions for marrying, and in one published for the year 1642 are these restrictions:

'*Times prohibiting marriage this yeer.*

'From the 27 of November till January 13.
'From Februarie 6 untill April 18.
'From May 16 until June 5.'

And in the Twickenham register it is recorded, under the year 1615, that 'Christopher Mitchell and Anne Colcott [were] married June 4, by permission of Sir Richard Chaworth, it being within the octaves of Pentecost.'

A most important preliminary of marriage in bygone times was the betrothal or nuptial contract, termed 'sponsalia,' which generally took place before a priest, and was always confirmed by gifts, several allusions to which have been given by Shakespeare. In 'Twelfth Night' (Act IV., Scene 3) we have a minute description of such a ceremonial, for when Olivia is hastily espoused to Sebastian, she says:

'Now go with me, and with this holy man,
Into the chantry by: there, before him,
And underneath that consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith.'

Although it has not been usual 'to keep a register of espousals contracted *in facie ecclesiæ*, one entry of them has been discovered in the

register of Boughton Monchelsea, Kent; and in this case an interval of three years seems to have elapsed between the espousals and marriage ceremony.

Occasionally the marriage contract was registered in the form of a special covenant, an example of which may be quoted from the register of Rothwell, Northamptonshire:

'1693-4. Wee, Thomas Humphrey, of Thorpwaterfield, in y^e^ county of Northampton, and Elizabeth Bigge, of Broughten, in ye same county, doe in ye presence of ye Lord Jesus, His Angeles and people, and all besides here present, solemnly give up ourselves to one another in y^e^ Lord as man and wife in a solemn marriage covenant, promising in y^e^ aforesaid awfull presence, in y^e^ strength of that grace that is in Christ Jesus, to discharge all those relative duties belonging to each of us respectively. In witness whereof we have set our hands and seales this 20 of February in y^e^ fifth year of y^e^ reign of our Sovereign Lord and Lady, William and Mary of England. This covenant was solemnized in the presence of us, etc.'

And the following covenant in the register of Bermondsey, dated 1604, further shows how, in days of old, a man and his wife occasionally made up a quarrel by mutual forgiveness without having recourse, as nowadays, to the Divorce Court:

'The Man's Speech: "Elizabeth, my beloved wife, I am right sorie that I have so longe absented my sealfe from thee, whereby thou shouldest be occasioned to take another man to thy hus-

band. Therefore I do now vowe and promise, in the sight of God and this Companie, to take thee againe as mine owne, and will not onelie forgive thee, but also dwell with thee, and do all other duties unto thee as I promised at our marriage."

'The Woman's Speech: "Ralphe, my beloved husband, I am right sorie that I have in thy absence taken another man to be my husband; but here, before God and this Companie, I do renounce and forsake him, and do promise to kepe my sealfe onelie unto thee duringe life, and to perform all duties which I first promised unto thee in our marriage."

'The Prayer: "Almightie God, we beseech Thee to pardon our offences, and give us grace ever hereafter to live together in Thy feare, and to perform the holie duties of mariage one to another, accordinge as we are taught in thy holie word, for thy deare Son's sake, Jesus. Amen."

'1 Aug. 1604. Ralphe Goodchilde of the parish of Barkinge in Thames Street, and Elizabeth his wife, were agreed to live together, and thereupon gave their hands one to another, making either of them a solemn vowe so to do, etc.'

According to Hilton register, Dorsetshire, celibacy was apparently punished in the last century, for under the year 1739 this entry is given: 'Ordered that all young unmarried persons above seventeen years of age do forthwith go to service, or be proceeded against according to law.' And Hawstead register tells how a certain William Caustone, on account of his marriage, 'is liable to

pay two shillings and sixpence as the King's duty.' This payment refers to an Act of Parliament of William III.'s reign already referred to, entitled 'An Act for granting to his Majesty certain rates and duties upon Marriages, Births, and Burials, and upon Bachelors and Widowers, for the term of five years, for carrying on the war against France with vigour.' The tax on marriage was thus :

	£	*s.*	*d.*
'Upon the marriage of every person - -	0	2	6
„ „ a Duke - - -	50	0	0
„ „ a Marquis - - -	40	0	0
„ „ an Earl - - -	30	0	0
Bachelors, above 25 years old, yearly - -	0	1	0
Widowers „ „ „ - -	0	1	0
A Duke, being bachelor or widower, yearly -	12	10	0
A Marquess „ „ „ -	10	0	0'

But this Act, as might naturally be expected, caused a great deal of friction and discontent, and every means was adopted to avoid it. It was undoubtedly arbitrary, and was denounced as an extreme and unjust measure. It is made the subject of a memorandum in the register of Hawstead :

'1783. An Act takes place 1 October that imposes a tax of 3^{d} upon the entry of every christening, marriage, and burial, except those of some poor persons particularly circumstanced—a tax most vexatious to the Clergy, and which, it is thought, will be unproductive to the State.'

From time immemorial, too, there has been a popular notion that a man is not liable for his wife's debts if he marries her in her shift only,

and many instances of this having actually taken place are recorded in register books. A remarkable entry occurs in the register of St. Chad, Saddleworth:

'On Tuesday sen'night was married, at the Parochial Chapel of Saddleworth, Abraham Brooks, as a widower, of about 30 years of age, to Mary Bradley, a widow of near 70, but as the Bride was a little in Debt, the Bridegroom obliged her to be married in her shift, and the weather being very severe threw her into such a violent fit of shaking as induced the compassionate minister to cover her with his coat whilst the marriage was solemnized.'

The register books at Chiltern All Saints, Wiltshire, tell how Anne Selwood was 'married in her smock, without any clothes or head-gear on.' And at Whitehaven, in 1766, a woman actually stripped herself to her shift in the church, and in that condition she stood in the chancel, and was married. It may be added that as recently as 1844 a woman was married in Lincolnshire enveloped in a sheet. And some years ago, when a similar case occurred, the parson, finding nothing in the rubric about the woman's dress, thought he could not refuse to marry her in her chemise only.

Sometimes the parson has given an interesting account of the marriage of a deaf and dumb man, as at St. Martin's, Leicester, in the year 1576, when Thomas Tilsye 'with approbation of the Bishop, his Commissarye, the Mayor, etc.,' was married by signs to Ursula Russel, 'laying his hande upon his

hearte, and holdinge up his handes toward heaven. And to show his continuance to dwell with her till his lyves ende, he did it by closing his eyes, and digging out of earth with his foote, and pulling as though he would ring a bell.'

And another memorandum in the register of St. Botolph, Aldgate, tells us how 'Thomas Speller, a dumb person, by trade a Smith, of Hatfield Broadoake, in the county of Essex, and Sarah Earle, daughter to one John Earle, of Great Paringdon, in the same county, yeoman, were married by licence, granted by Dr. Edwards, Chancellor of the Diocese of London, the seventh day of November, Anno Dni 1618, which licence aforesaid was granted at the request of Sir Francis Barrington, Knight, and others of the place abovenamed, who by their letters certified Mr. Chancellor that the parents of either of them had given their consents to the said marriage, and the said Thomas Speller the dumb parties willingness to have the same performed, appeared, by taking the Book of Common Prayer and his licence in one hand and his bride in the other, and coming to Mr. John Briggs, our minister and preacher, and made the best signs he could to show that he was willing to be married, which was then performed accordinglie. And also the said Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, as Mr. Briggs was informed, was made acquainted with the said marriage before it was solemnized, and allowed to be lawful. This marriage is set down at large, because we never had the like before.'

Again, not the least curious feature of the

marriage lore, as told by the parish register, are the remarks, oftentimes far from complimentary, made on the bridal couple. Thus, it is recorded how on June 6, 1734, 'John Housden, widower, a gape-mouthed, lazy fellow, and Hannah Matthews, an old toothless, wriggling hag, both of Faversham, were trammell'd by licence at the Cathedral, Sea Salter;' and on August 5, 1750, Wm. Parnell and Mary Steed, 'a doleful and forbidding, saturnine damsel,' were married in the same church. Indeed, all kinds of quaint items, information respecting the bridal couple, are occasionally given. An entry in the registers of St. Andrew's Church, Newcastle, dated August 30, 1639, informs us that 'An owelld man and a woman' were 'mared: they had 2 boyes that danst of a rop in the Kasell [Castle] Yard.' And another entry, under September 23, 1641, is to this effect: 'Thomas Blacket to his dame Marie Grene. She did love him in his master's time.' But it would seem that newly-married folk did not always value the sacred rite of matrimony, for an entry in the same register records how on February 9, 1640, 'Thomas Karr and Joan Lauton [were] marred one of the Skotes Army and wold pay nothing to the Church.'

It is noteworthy that the word 'spinster' never occurs in the parish registers of Kendal until the commencement of the eighteenth century, the words invariably used to signify the female unmarried state being 'single woman.'

In the register of Tottenham, the phrase 'I publisht an intention of marriage' is used by the

Vicar from the year 1654 to 1659. Thus, an entry under November 29, 1659, records the marriage of a Mr. Roland Ingram, of St. Martin's, Ludgate, and Mrs. Ann Gorst, of Tottenham, 'their intention of marriage having been first published in the said Parish Church on 3 Lord's days, no exception being made against the said marriage on any of the said times of publishing.'

From the Serbergham registers, it would seem that the consent of parents was required, even when the bride was over twenty-one, in cases of marriage by licence. To quote an instance of this custom, we read that :

'John Hodgson, of the Parish of St. Mary's in the City of Carlisle, Surgeon, aged 32, and Esther Simpson, of this Parish, Spinster, aged 21, were married in this Church by License, with consent of John Simpson, Esquire, Father of the said Esther, this twelfth Day of December, in the year 1776.'

Under 1787 this curious entry occurs :

'Thomas Furnace, of this Parish, aged —, and Margaret Wood, of this Parish, likewise aged —, were married in this Church by license (with consent of Mary McKie, her mother, formerly married to Daniel Wood deceased) in this Church by ——. License could not be procured for this couple, as the girl was a minor, and the Lord High Chancellor her guardian.'

The above was inserted too prematurely ; for although the 'Lord High Chancellor' may well have objected, the marriage took place :

'1787. Thomas Furnace, of this Parish,

Yeoman and Widower, aged 53, and Margaret Wood, of this Parish likewise, Spinster, aged 15, were married in this Church by Banns this fifth Day of August, 1787.'

But the disparity of age was sometimes on the side of the woman, for in the Sheldon register the following strange entry occurs:

'6th January, 1753. The man about 14 years of age. Marrd;—Cornelius White and Ellen Dale. The woman 70 . . . of Sheldon.'

An account of this curious wedding appeared in the *Derby Mercury* of January, 1753:

'Last Saturday, at the chapel of Sheldon, in the High Peak of Derbyshire, were solemnized the nuptials of a widow, gentlewoman, of that place, of about eighty years of age, to a young lad—by the consent of his parents—of about fourteen. As she was rendered incapable of walking by a complication of disorders, she was carried in her chair from her house to the chapel, about a hundred yards distant, attended by a numerous concourse of people, where the ceremony was performed with becoming seriousness and devotion, after which she was reconducted in the same manner, the musick playing, by her orders, the Duke of Rutland's Hornpipe before her; to which (as she was disabled from dancing) she beat time with her hands on her petticoats till she got home, and then called for her crutches, commanded her husband to dance, and shuffled herself as well as she could—the day being spent with the ringing of the bell and other demonstrations of joy, and the populace—mostly miners—being soundly drenched with showers of excellent liquor, etc., that were

plentifully poured upon them. The new-married couple, to consummate their marriage, were at length put to bed, to the side of which that well-polished and civilised company were admitted; the stocking was thrown, the posset drank, and the whole concluded with all the decorum, decency and order imaginable.'

It seems that the bride did not live many days after her marriage, for the subjoined paragraph is dated for the same month—January, 1753:

'We are informed that last Sunday died at Sheldon, near Bakewell, the old gentlewoman who was married the 6th instant to a young lad, aged about fourteen. Her corpse was brought to Bakewell Church on Tuesday last, where she was handsomely interred, and a funeral sermon preached on the occasion to a numerous and crowded audience by the rev. gentleman who had so lately performed the nuptial ceremony.'

But sometimes it would seem that the aspirants to matrimony not only disregarded the law, but caused the parson to do the same, as the following entry from one of the Glaisdale registers shows:

'David Morley and Mary Fenwick m^d^ October 18, 1753. June 17, 1754: then received of the Rev. M^r^ Robinson, Curate of Glaisdale, the sum of ten shillings as an acknowledgment for his having infringed upon the Parish Church of Danby, marrying the said David Morley, though by a surrogate's license, in the said Chapel of Glaisdale, without leave or a Certificate first obtained from the Curate of the Parish of Danby aforesaid. I say, received by me—James Deason,

Minister of Danby. P.S.—Mr. Robinson had but five shillings for marrying, and yet thought he came off well with being only five shillings out of pocket.—J. D.'

We may note that, in Lambeth parish register, under the year 1569, it is recorded that on May 11 John Waters and Isabel Denam, both 'servantes to my lord's Grace of Canterbury,' were married 'without banes by his command.'

Occasionally marriage entries are made in rhyme, an example of which we quote from the Greystoke registers, under October 25, 1665 :

'What time brings forth there's none that can p'sage
John Todhunter, of eighty yeares of age,
Married to Agnes Strickett, who's supposed to be
A virgin, and her age is sixty-three.
Both of this parish, w^ch causes admiration—
The like hath scarce been known within this station.'

And a memorandum in the register of All-hallows, London Wall, 'must,' writes Malcolm in his 'Londinium Redivivum' (ii. 69), 'relax the features of the gravest reader.' It runs thus :

'The last marriage is Feb. 2, 1580-1 ; the next Aprill 30, 1581. Here endeth the yeare of oure Lorde 1580 ; and hereafter foloweth the yeare of oure Lord 1581, and is as in the next leaf is to be seen. So that there is no more marriages than ye here see; and therefore doth make they are so to end, and the other so to begynn : not that begynnyng and endyng of the yere is so, but that the one is the last that was in that yere, and the other the first that was to begynne the other yere, which is as foloweth : 1581, etc.'



CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

APART from its importance as recording the deaths 'of all sorts and conditions' of men, the parish register illustrates in a unique manner the historical lore associated with man's exit from the world. Little incidents, too, and fragments of gossip relating to the burial usages of the past are here briefly chronicled, oftentimes throwing light on the domestic life of the past.

Thus, amongst some of the many curious scenes witnessed at funerals, we are told in the register of Christchurch, Hants, how a certain Christina Steevens was 'buried by women' on April 14, 1604, 'for she was a papishe'; and at Bishop Middleham, Durham, 'a Scotsman and soldier, dying at Cornforth, the soldiers themselves buried him without any minister, or any prayers over him, on the 4th November, 1644.' Entries of this kind are by no means infrequent, and those relating to the interment of excommunicated persons are equally strange. In an appendix, for

instance, to the register of Pentrobin, Flintshire, it is recorded how 'a single woman, though excommunicated, was on this day, within night, on account of some particular circumstances alleged by neighbours of credit in her favour—as to her resolving to come and reconcile herself, and do penance if she recovered—indulged by being interred on the "backside the Church, but no service or tolling allowed."' The term 'backside' probably alludes to the north side of the churchyard, which was oftentimes left unconsecrated for the burial of excommunicated persons. One entry speaks of a woman 'being buried in a field, as unworthy of burial'; and old Fuller tells us (1545) that formerly a plot of ground, 'farre from the Parish Church, was set apart for the women from the stews in Southwark, called the Single Women's Church Yard.'

Again, an entry in the register of Weedon Beck, Northamptonshire, informs us how 'William Radhouse the Elder, dying excom^{d}, was buried by stealthe, in the night time, in ye churchyard, y^{e} 29th day of January, 1615, whereupon y^{e} Church was interdicted a fortnight.' The mention here of burial by night reminds us that such a practice was observed for the sake of secrecy; but, notwithstanding every precaution, such funerals were occasionally the scene of much disorder. Another allusion to this custom may be noticed in the register of Bruton, under June 6, 1688: 'The Right Honble. Charles Lord Viscount Fitz Harding, was between twelve and one of the clock in the night, after a sermon preached, buried in a

vault in the Church, in a coffin of lead.' And in the registers of Toddington, Bedfordshire, it is recorded how 'Honoratissimus, D.D. Thomas Wentworth, Comes Cliniæ fidelissimus regis subditus patronus meus multis hominibus colendus sepultus erat in crypta circiter, Nov. 9. Nocte April 4° (1667).' An entry in the register of Kensington records that, in the year 1619, 'Robert Fen the Elder, Esq., an eminent household servant to Queen Elizabeth, and unto our most gracious King James a faithful professor of true religion, and a most charitable friend to the poor, of the age of 77, was buried on Friday night, at 10 o'clock, April 23.' And in the register of Bedwyn Magna, Wiltshire, it is recorded that, in the year 166c, 'William, Duke of Somerset, late Marquis of Hartforde, was buried on the feast of All Saints at night, being the first day of Nov^mber.'

In the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1817, lxxxvii., part ii., 13) an account is given of the funeral of the Duchess of Northumberland in the year 1782, which it is stated 'took place by torchlight at four in the morning, to avoid the mischief of too great a number of persons interrupting the same; which, however, was not the case, as the concourse of people was so numerous at the screens to the small chapels surrounding the south side of the choir that many had their legs and arms broken, and were otherwise much bruised. From this time no burials have been performed by torchlight except royal ones, a sufficient guard attending to keep order on the occasion.' And an entry in the registers of Hawstead, under the year 1624, runs

as follows: 'The buryall of the right worshipfull lady the lady Anne Drury, widow, once the wife of the right worshipfull Sir Robert Drury, lord of Hawstead. Shee dyed in Hardwick House, 5 June, about ten o'clock in the night, and was buryed in Hawstead Church Chancel, 6 June, about eleven o'clock in the night.'

In days gone by the law relating to the burial of suicides was very stringent. In Mayfield register it is recorded, under the year 1629, how 'one Will Duke, servant to Jas. Aynscombe, drowned himself on the 28th April, but was not buried with Christian burial'; and a note in Godalming register tells how on April 9, 1608, 'was buried at lannaways Crosse a stranger, wch hanged himselfe at John Denier's howse.' Indeed, so strictly was this rule enforced in cases of suicide, that in the following instance at Granchester, in Cambridgeshire, where the case seems to have been one of insanity, it was even carried into effect: 'Edwardus Ward, infans Edwardi, cujus mater cum ferro inhumanissime eum interfecit, eodemque tempore et instrumento eodem seipsam vitâ spoliavit. Infans in cemeterio est sepultus; mater vero, quasi Christianâ sepulturâ indigna, sepulta fuit in agro, 1640.'* And in the register of Frant, Sussex, there is a still stronger case in which the party had been declared insane by the coroner's inquest: 'Dunstan Fordman was interred without the service of the Church, having laid violent hands on himself, and having been returned by

* See 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., pp. 257, 258.

the jury "Non compos mentis." ' Shakespeare speaks of this law in the case of poor Ophelia :

> ' *Laertes.* What ceremony else ?
> *Priest.* Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
> As we have warranty : her death was doubtful ;
> And, that but great command o'ersways the order,
> She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
> Till the last trumpet ; for charitable prayers,
> Shards, flints, and pebbles, should be thrown on her,
> Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,
> Her maiden strewnments, and the bringing home
> Of bell and burial.
> *Laertes.* Must there no more be done ?
> *Priest.* No more be done !
> We should profane the service of the dead,
> To sing a requiem, and such rest to her,
> As to peace parted souls.'

In the register of Blatchington it is recorded that in the year 1653 'Sarah Reynolds, servant, came to an untimely end, as it was thought, May the 1st at night, for from that time she was not seen living, and she was then found in a pond at the lower end of the parish ; she was laid in the ground the 5th June.' And a similar case happened at Newhaven, when a mother, whose child had died and was buried, drowned herself two days afterwards in the harbour, and was refused Christian burial.

But the register of Wadhurst informs us that occasionally the rites of burial were forfeited on account of the person dying of some infectious disease, as happened on November 1, 1674, when a woman named Damaris, the wife of Robert Gower, was buried, ' Sine exequiis non ob malum

morale sed ob infectionem morbillorum'—a good Christian.*

In the reign of Elizabeth it was customary to bury merely in a winding-sheet, without any coffin. The register of Poynings, Sussex, tells us how on 'the eighteenth day of April, 1608, was buried John Skerry, a poore man, that died in the place stable, and being brought half naked with his face bare, the parson would not bury him so, but first he gave a sheete, and caused him to be sacked therein, and they buried him more Christian-like, being much grieved to see him brought so unto the grave; and at this time did one Thatcher dwell at the place.' The parson's indignation was probably roused not because the body was brought in a winding-sheet, but on account of the insufficiency of it.

In the register of Great and Little Abingdon this entry is given, a curious combination of business and sentiment:

'Burial without a coffin, 1^{s}; for a grave in the church, 6^{s} 8^{d}; in the chancel, 13^{s} 4^{d}. But the most honourable Grave of any man whatsoever is in the Churchyard, because that shows most honour to God's house. The great first Christian Emperor Constantine, and many of his successors, were buried in the Churchyard.'

On the other hand, the register of St. Michael's, Lichfield, in 1632 states, as something worthy of note, 'that Andrew, the sonne of William Burnes, was buried with a coffin.'

Then there were the so-called 'solemn burials,'

* 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., p. 277.

which seem to have been attended with much pomp and ceremony, and oftentimes the preparations were so extensive that the funeral had to be postponed for several weeks after the interment. In the parish of Iselham, Cambridge, under the year 1590, this entry occurs: 'Mr. Robert Peyton, Esquier, died 19 Oct., and was solemnly buried 12 Nov. next morning.' Such 'solemn burials' no doubt consisted of the funeral sermon, with a display of the hearse, adorned with armorial ensigns, etc.; at the same time the wine, wafers, gloves, and rosemary were probably distributed.

A memorandum in the register of Stock Harward, Essex, under 1642, runs thus:

'That vertuous: religious: humble: and trulie Charitable Gentlewoman, M^rs^ Juliet Coo, the wife of William Coo Esquire, departed this mortal life in the Cittie of London on Wednesday May 18. And was from thence conveyed in a coach to this towne where she dwelt; and was there solemnly interred (as beseemed her ranke), in the Chancell belonging to this Parish Church on Friday May 20, where her worth and eminent vertues (to her eternall memory) were both elegantlie and trulie related in a learned-funerall-sermon, by that Reverend man of God Mr. William Pindar, rector there.'

And, to quote another case, the register of St. Bartholomew, Broad Street, records under 1581 the burial of Mr. Francis Bowyer, Alderman, in St. Michael's Church; but, it adds, the 'solemnities of his funeral were ministered in this, the 7^th^ of August.'

And a memorandum in the register of Cople, Bedfordshire, tells how Nicholas Luke, who died on July 4, 1613, 'att Rouney, was buried the 5th July in the north Chauncell of Cople, whose funerall was kepte wth great solemnitie the 4th day of August ensueinge.'

When a person of distinction died, the funeral service was frequently performed—with an effigy of the deceased—in the various churches with which he had been connected, and such a funeral was entered in the parish register; and when persons of rank died in one parish and were buried in another, it was the usual custom to record the burial in the registers of both parishes.

Again, the following interesting entry in Hillingdon registers throws some light on the burial usages of the past:

'Anno. 1663. July. 6. This day the Hearse of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, some time Lord High Tresurer of England, going to Oxford, where he was to be interred, had Buriall here offered by mee, meeting it at the Church gate with the service book, a surplice and hood, attended with the Clark, and the great bell solemnly tolling all the while, according to the ancient and laudable custom in like cases.'

As it has been observed,* 'we might suppose that the vicar intended to pay special reverence to the body of the Archbishop—better known as Bishop—Juxon, the loyal and devout prelate who performed the last religious offices for Charles I. on the scaffold. But the words used, "according

* The *Antiquary*, vol. xviii., pp. 64, 65.

to the ancient and laudable custom in such cases," exclude this idea.' The probable explanation is that it is the record of a claim for burial fees, 'for at this time,' says Mr. Waters, 'there was a marked revival of all kinds of obsolete claims, arising out of Archbishop Laud's zeal for ritual observance,' and this view is supported by the following note in the *Antiquary:*

'An executor of a gentleman whose body was carried for burial to a distant church through several parishes had to pay the fees for burial and for tolling the bell in each parish. It was the custom, I would suggest, that to insure the payment the vicar made all the arrangements named, *i.e.*, tolled the bell and appeared vested, for I fancy that unless the bell was tolled actually, "custom could not be urged." The argument would be, "We are ready to offer you Christian burial, and therefore you must pay the fees."'

And in the parish register of Tregaron, Cardiganshire, among the customary fees formerly paid by the inhabitants on various occasions, the following was due to the parish clerk in case of a funeral:

'At the death of every marryed man and woman there is . . . to ye Clerk of y^e^ man's wearing apparel, his best hat and his best shoes and stockings, and from every woman her head flannen or hood, and her best shoes and stockings, beside what is due for digging of their graves.'

In the Kendal parish registers the circumstance of a pauper being unable to pay the burial fees is noticed, his unfortunate, helpless condition being

thus referred to: 'And one man child brought up in the town which no man could show who ought him buried.'

The law of Edward VI. for enforcing the removal of the aged poor to the place of their birth, or last residence—an act which was sometimes attended with fatal results—is noticed in the register of Staplehurst:

'1578, There was comytted to the earth the body of one Johan Longley, who died in the highway as she was carried on horseback to have been conveyed from officer to officer, till she should have com to the parish Rayershe.'

Then there was the mortuary fee, an arbitrary exaction forbidden by 21 Henry VIII., and which was actually at times levied on those who at death had no property in goods or chattels. But although the levying of these mortuaries or corse presents 'from travelling or wayfaring men in the places where they fortuned to die' was expressly forbidden by statute, the law seems oftentimes to have been disregarded. Thus, the Rector of Ripe, Sussex, tells us how on February 22, 1634, he buried one Alice Whitesides, 'who, being but one weeke in the parishe of Ripe, died as a stranger, for whose mortuary, I, John Goffe, had a gown of Elizabeth her daughter, price 10^{s}.'

On another occasion the same parson has made this entry:

'William Wade, who died as a stranger, for whose mortuary, I, John Goffe, Parson of Rype, had his upper garment, which was an old coate, and I receaved for the same 6^{s}.'

Among further entries relating to mortuary fees the subjoined occurs in the register of Ockley, Surrey :

'I recd of M^r^ Worsfold, nephew of M^r^ Worsfold of Lye field, ten shillings for a mortuary on the 26^th^ August 1733, on account of the Death of his uncle who was buried at Ewhurst.'

'Received, March 10^th^ 1779, ten shillings mortuary six and eightpence breach of ground and one guinea for a funeral sermon, and on account of the burial of William Margesson, Esq^re^, an ornament to his good family.'

And a memorandum in the register of Aldborough, Yorkshire, tells us that 'the vicarage of Burg is endowed with all the oblations of parishioners, and with mortuaries, except living cattle ; it also hath the tithe of orchards and virgults, and the increase of cattle, except of wool and lambs ; in which respect the vicar shall cause the mother Church, with its chapels of Dunsford and Broughbridge to be honestly served.' At Uxbridge an executor gives £20 in money, 'one fyne towell, two pairs of fyne sheets, and a pent-house beeve.'

Once more, a memorandum in the register of Aldborough, Yorkshire, respecting burials, runs thus :*

'If any recusant not being excommunicated shall be buryed in any place but in church or churchyard, his executors shall forfitt thirtie pounds by statute, therefore I conceive you ought to burie him, but let it be according to the forme of

* See *Yorkshire Archæological Journal*, vol. ix., p. 196.

the Church of England, these directions were sent under Doctor Burwell's own hand, Aug. 18, 1663, when S^r^ Thomas Tanckird was to bee buried.'

During the reign of Charles II. a singular Act was passed, which has left a conspicuous mark on parish records. The object of this Act was to 'lessen the importation of linen from beyond the seas, and to encourage the woollen manufacture of this kingdom'; and on this account it provided that the dead should be buried in woollen only. Compliance with its requirements was often noted in the registers; and a prejudice still existing among the lower classes in favour of shrouds made of flannel is no doubt an outgrowth from the now obsolete compulsory usage of two hundred years ago.* But the higher classes disliked the Act, and tried as much as possible to evade the law, a fact which is notified in many of the parish registers. Pope, it may be remembered, wrote of Mrs. Oldfield, who was buried in Westminster Abbey in a Brussels lace headdress, a holland shift with tucker, and double ruffles of the same lace, and a pair of new kid gloves, these lines:

> '"Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke!"
> (Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke);
> "No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
> Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face."'

In the register of St. Mary le Bow, Durham, it is entered that 'Christopher Bell, Gent., was lapped in linen, contrary to the late Act, Dec., 1678'; and numerous entries to the same effect occur

* See *Cornhill Magazine*, 'The Story of the Registers,' 1879, vol. xl., p. 320.

elsewhere. At Harmondsworth, in 1726, it is noted that six guineas and fifty shillings were given to the poor for a burial in linen ; and at Hayes that an informer—who would have half the fine—gave sworn information of one who had been buried in a coffin with velvet ; of another, that she left in her will that she should be buried in linen, and had her desire. And in the register of Aldborough, Yorkshire, under 1716, is this entry : 'The Information of Margaret Robinson, made on Oath before M^r^ Thomas Wilkinson, her grandchild, that she the said M^rs^ Eliz: Wilkinson was buryed in Linning on the fifth day of Feb: 1717, contrary to the Act of Parliament for bureying in woolen.'

On the other hand, there are frequently found in parish registers 'lists of the affidavits brought, in pursuance of the Act, to the clergyman on the burial of individuals of their being shrouded in linen ; and these often afford information not to be met with in the registers themselves.'* A specimen of one of these affidavits we quote below :

'Dec. 20, 1768, recd this affidavit. Com. Lanc. Manchester, Dec. 20, 1718, which day Ann wife of Sam^l^ Hampson of Stretford, in the parish of Manchester, Thatcher made oath y^t^ the body of Sarah wife of Tho. Tipping, of the township and parish aforesaid, Husbandman, lately deceased (December 14), was interr'd according to the Act of Parliament for burying in wollen.'†

And the following form of oath taken on such

* Burn, 'History of Parish Registers,' p. 29.

† *Reliquary*, vol. lxxiii., p. 93.

an occasion is duly registered in the church books of Frant:

'John Beale, of the parish of Frant, labourer, maketh oath that the corps of a child of his, lately deceased, was not putt in, wrapt, or wound up, or buried, in any shirt, shift, sheet, or shroud, made or mingled with flax, hemp, silk, or hair, gold, or silver, or other than what is made of sheep's wool, nor in any coffin lined or cased with any cloth, stuff, or any other thing whatsoever made or mingled with flax, hemp, silk, hair, gold or silver, or any other material but sheep's wool only. 1678.'

The custom of taking out the heart of the deceased and burying it apart from the body has prevailed even up to recent times. Oftentimes, too, when it was desired to remove the body to a great distance for burial, it was considered necessary to deprive it of its internals, which were generally buried where the person happened to die. In the register of Norton, Durham, this memorandum is given under March 22, 1756: 'Bur: the heart and bowells of the right honorable James Earl of Wemyss. The remains were buried with his ancestors at Wemys Castle, in Scotland, the 8th day of April.' An entry in the register of St. Mary's, Reading, under 1631, records the death of Sir Edward Clarke, Knight, Steward of Reading, and adds, 'his bowells interred in St. Marie's, his body carried to Dorchester, in Oxfordshire, Jan. 11.' It is said that Henry Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, who received his death wound at the fatal Battle of Newbury, 'was buried in the Church

at Brington, which is the parish of Althorp, the family seat. This, however, does not appear to be at all certain, as there is no entry in the register recording the fact; but a leaden drum deposited in a vault in the church is supposed to contain his heart. This case has no inscription, or even date, upon it.'* The register of Denham informs us that the heart of Sir Robert Peckham, Knight, was 'buried in the vault under the chappell.'

In pursuance of the same fashion, it is recorded in the Richmond register, Surrey, under November 12, 1599, that 'Mrs Elizabeth Ratcliff one of the maids of honor died, and her bowells buried in the Chancell at Richmond.' In the register, again, of St. Bridget, Farringdon Without, under April 20, 1608, it is recorded that 'the bowells of the right hon. lord treasurer, Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset were interred.' Another entry in the register of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West states that on December 8, 1651, 'the bowells of the Right Hon. Elizabeth Countess of Kent was buried at the upper end of the Chancel, who died ye 7th of this month.' And under July 24, 1600, this entry occurs: 'Sir Anthony Paulet, Knight, died at Kew, whose bowells were interred at Richmounte.' Sir Anthony Poulet was made Governor of the Isle of Jersey on the death of his father, September 26, 1588, and was Captain of the Guard to Queen Elizabeth, who conferred the honour of knighthood upon him.†

* 'Enshrined Hearts of Warriors and Illustrious People,' Emily Sophia Hartshorne, p. 292.

† See 'Surrey Archæological Society's Proceedings,' 1864, vol. ii., p. 84.

In many registers great care was taken to give the exact position of the person buried, a practice which gave rise to such entries being made in a somewhat quaint fashion. Thus, under March 25, 1720, the Greensted register informs us that 'John Pool of Sayers was buryed in woollen June 13th 1720 under the seats near the Isle on the north side of the Church his feet lye to the head of Mr Glascock his father whose feet reach within a foot of the Desk.' And under 1721 it is stated that 'Nicholas son of John Clarke Esqre aged about 21 months was buryed in woollen as p. affidavit, Decr ye 21st 1721 his corpse was set upon the feet of his mother's in the new vault, who dyed in childbed of this son as above the time buryed.'

Likewise, oftentimes full particulars are given as to the kind of grave in which the person was interred. In the same parish, for instance, 'Mr Thomas Wragg Clerk was buryed in woollen Sepr the 10th 1723 at the East End of the Churcyard wth in 5 foot of the Pales over agst the Chancell window. The grave work't up with Brick 3 foot high then covered with Plank and Earth upon it.' Notices of this kind are very common, and are interesting as illustrating individual eccentricities.

In the registers of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester, 'it is noteworthy that in the burials the exact situation in the church or churchyard in which the interments were made is carefully set out';* and in a measure this also applies to some of the burial

* 'Notes on the Ancient Parish Books of the Church of St. Mary-on the-Hill,' J. P. Earwaker, 1887.

entries in the register of St. Alphage, Canterbury. In the year 1561, for instance, Mrs. Lovelace was buried in the church before the door going into the choir; and in the same year Nicholas Lovelace was buried behind his sister, before the choir door. In 1578 the wife of Thomas Rolfe was interred in the church 'in the first pace,' by which is probably meant the porch; and in the next year William Toddye was buried 'in the second pace, near the font,' which would be at the west end of the church, before the porch (under the tower). In 1656 Roger Sympson was interred 'in the North Aisle going into the Minister's Chancel'; and in 1657 Jane Roberts was buried in 'Sir John's Pew.'* An entry in the register of Theydon Mount, Essex, records the burial, on September 25, 1664, of 'Grace, dau^r^ of Sir John Lloyd, Baronet. She lies buried in the entrance of the chancel on the right hand, under the seat where the menservants of Hill Hall used to sit. Died of y^e^ plague.' In the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, it is stated that in 1709 John Paris was buried 'hard by the meeting table'; and in the year 1713 a body was buried 'by the meeting table,' the Communion Table being probably meant.

At the end of one of the register-books of North Marston is this memorandum: 'Jan. 29^th^ Ed. Oviat, an obstinate absentee, who would not be buried in ye Churchyard, but in his orchard.' The year is not stated, but the entry appears to

* 'Registers of St. Alphage, Canterbury,' J. M. Cowper, Introduction, p. xviii.

have been made in the handwriting of the Rev. Purchas Deuchfield, who was presented to the living in 1742, and died in 1774. It is said, too, that his widow was buried in a similar manner.

Burials in gardens, however, have occurred from time to time, and the register of Toddington, Berkshire, has this entry: '1658. Nov. 14. Thomas Matthew, died the 12th day of November and was buried the 14th day of November 1658 in his garden late taken out of his orchard.' It may be noted that the first grave of the celebrated John Wilkinson, known in his day as 'the great ironmaster and the Father of the Iron trade,' was in his own garden at Castlehead, and his last in the quiet little churchyard at Lendal-in-Cartmel. In giving an account of Dr. William Bentley, a celebrated physician, who died September 13, 1680, and was buried at Northwich, Ormerod's 'History of Cheshire' mentions that 'the body of Dr. Bentley is interred in a vault at the summit of the garden, where his tomb was discovered in taking down a summer-house built over it.'

In St. Peter's, Cornhill, under October 23, 1594, this memorandum is given:

'William Ashboold, soune of Mr William Ashboold, Parson of this Church, a toward young child, and my scholler, he lieth buried in the Chauncell under a small blewish stone, hard by the South dore: whose death wroong from me these suddain verses:

'My sweet and little boy, my lif, my joyful sight;
Thou wast thy father's earthly joy, and mother's chief delight!

Though heauy destinyes haue ta'ne thee soone away
Yet enuious death shall give thee ioyes that neuer shall decay!
Thou wast my scholler deare, but henceforth thou shalt bee
A scholler of thy Maister Christ through all eternitie.'

And under September 9, 1603, a further entry records his brother's death:

'Fridaie Henrie Ashboold my scholler sonne of M^r^ Doctor Ashboold parson of this church, a youth composed and framed out of the mould of vertu; for learning and modestie in so yong yeares admirable, hee lieth buried in the high Chauncell under a small blewish stone w^th^ his brother.

'O happie Henry, thou hast runne thy race—
The graue thie corpes, the heauens thy soule embrace.'

Registers of burial, too, contain many curious entries, some of which possess a certain humour, whilst others briefly tell their own pathetic tale. In Streatham register a touching entry occurs: 'Dec. 16. 1661. Follie—a strange woman buried'; and in Ashborn register occurs, under the year 1650, the burial of one Emma, wife of Thomas Toplis, 'who was found delivered of a child after she had lain two hours in her grave.'

In the register of Wragby, Yorkshire, we meet with this entry under the year 1542, which is peculiarly touching: 'Oone woman dwellinge by the way wch dyed without any knowledge of any of the pish dyd chaunge her lyffe the v^th^ day of June'; and in the register of Wisbech, under January 2, 1610, this memorandum is given:

'Prudence, the wife of William Holliday, a woman remarkably small, brought four children at a birth, three males and one female, perfect in all their features, of whom two as soon as born expired having quickly measured their course of this life, and were committed to Christian burial; two, being brought for baptism, are bound in the sacrament of regeneration, namely, Robert the son, and Elizabeth, the daughter of William Holiday, washed by solemn rite in the sacred font.'

An entry in the Islington register, recording the death of 'Elizabeth Emma Thomas, buried 29th October, 1808, aged 27,' relates to the following curious circumstances which took place on the interment of this young lady: On Saturday, October 29, the corpse was brought from Charterhouse Square, and buried in the churchyard. On the ensuing Monday a headstone was placed over her grave with this inscription:

'In memory of
MRS. ELIZABETH EMMA THOMAS
Who died the 28th October, 1808
Aged 27 years.

'She had no fault save what travellers give the moon:
Her light was lovely, but she died too soon.'

It was hinted that there had been some foul play with regard to the deceased, grounded on the fact of her dying, being buried, and a stone erected to her memory, in the short space of three days. Accordingly, her body was exhumed, and, on being examined, a large wire pin, which had been thrust through the left side of the body, was found sticking in the heart of the deceased. But it

appeared in evidence that the deceased, having been for some time indisposed, had received proper medical advice, and had at last succumbed to her disease. Further, that a gentleman with whom she had lived, being forced to leave for the Continent, was desirous of seeing her previously interred. That it was at her own request the pin was inserted by her medical adviser after the body had been placed in the coffin, to prevent the possibility of her being buried alive. These facts having been proved, the coroner's jury returned a verdict, 'Died by the visitation of God.'

In the register of Bowes, Yorkshire, it is recorded how 'Rodger Wrightson, jun., and Martha Railton, both of Bowes,' were 'buried in one grave on 15th March, 1714. He died in a fever, and upon tolling his passing bell, she cryed out, "My heart is broke," and in a few hours expired, purely, as was supposed, from love, aged about twenty years each.' The melancholy fate of these lovers is immortalized in Mallet's ballad of 'Edwin and Emma':

> 'I feel, I feel, this breaking heart
> Beat high against my side;
> From her white arm down sunk her head,
> She shivering, sighed and died.'

In Arlingham register, under 1763, there is a singular entry of burial:

'Stephen Aldridge, who was suffocated by a flat-fish, which he unadvisedly put betwixt his teeth when taken out of the net; but by a sudden spring it made into his throat, and killed him in

two minutes. It is here recorded as a warning to others, to prevent the like accident.'

A memorandum in the old register of Newdigate Church, Surrey, informs us that George ——, of the parish of Newdigate, single man, in the service of Mrs. Glover, 'wanting y^e^ feare of God,' 'did hang himself in her barne'; and in Carshalton register we are told how 'Thomas Brown a Soldier whose death was occasioned in play by a fork piercing his brain' was buried on April 26, 1781. A little later on in the same register the burial of John Junior is recorded, April 6, 1792; 'he had just returned from breakfast in apparent health to Mr. Curtis's mill, and was putting on his coat to work when he dropped down dead'; and on the 22nd of the same month 'two men were crushed to death by the falling in of a ceiling at Mr. Greggs house which was pulling down.' On August 7, 1768, was buried at Ockley 'Allis Osborn, whose death was occasioned by accidentally swallowing a thimble'; and in the register of Aldborough, Yorkshire, under 1836, the burial on May 1 of one Samuel Morrel Boro'bridge is given, who was 'killed in falling from a tree when stealing Rooks'; and the death of one of the parishioners at Skipton, Yorkshire, is recorded in the following manner: 'Burials—Feb. 7. 1684, John King of Skibdon was found pinyand and hanged in Haw Park.'*

An entry recorded in the register of St. Martin's, Ludgate, as Malcolm remarks in his 'Londinium

* See Nichols, 'Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica,' 1835, vol. ii., p. 296.

Redivivum' (iv. 358), 'may serve as an useful hint to some surgical or medical reader, who may learn from it that their predecessors disposed of the remains of a fellow-creature in a decent and proper way.' It is as follows: '1615. Feb. 28. was buried an anatomy from the College of Physicians.' And we may quote here an entry from Croydon parish register, dated June 21, 1615, which is quaint: 'Thomas Afworth, gent., wounded the xvii day of May, lay long languishinge under the handes of surgeons unto the xx day of June and then dyed, and was buried the xxi day, 1615, in the middle chancell in Croydon Churche.' And a further entry from the same register tells how 'James Mersh pulled ye eagle in ye church upon him, and cutt his hand, and blead to death, about 8 yeares old, and [was] buried ye 11. June, 1729.'

Under May 12, 1611, the register of Saffron Walden tells how 'Martha Warde, a young mayd coming from Chelmsford on a carte, was overwhelmed and smothered with certayn clothes which were in the carte, and was buried here'; and under September 4, 1623, 'buryed a poore man brought by the Little Chesterford constables to be examined by the justice; the justice being a hunting, the poore man died before his coming home from hunting.' It has been suggested that perhaps the squire had a longer run than usual with the hounds on this occasion. And under November 18, 1716, it is recorded that 'the oulde girle from the workhouse was buried.'

CHAPTER IX.

SOCIAL USAGES.

MANY of the social usages of bygone centuries which have long ago fallen into disuse, and may be reckoned amongst the forgotten things of the past, have been preserved in our parish registers. An important personage, who by his absurd antics and comic behaviour excited merriment, not only in the houses of the wealthy, but even at Court, was the domestic fool, allusions to whose wit and humour are frequently to be found in the literature of the period. In the register of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, under March 21, 1580, the death is recorded of 'William, fool to my Lady Jerningham.' And another entry in the register of Chester-le-Street, Durham, is to this effect: 'Ellis Thompson, Insipiens, Gul Lambton Militis, bu^r^. 26 April, 1627.' It may be noted, however, that this eccentric individual had not always a very happy time, for, we are told, 'if he was too dull, he was sent away; if too witty, he was sent to the porter

to be whipped. Sometimes he ran away to escape punishment, and was brought home like a strayed dog.'

An entry in the register of Allhallows, Bread Street, informs us that on May 2, 1621, was baptized William Mackonnell, the son of the Prince's foolman, living in Master Repinge's house in Red Lion Court. This 'foolman,' says Malcolm in his 'Londinium Redivivum' (1803, ii. 10) 'might perhaps have belonged to Prince Henry, who died in the year 1612; but the motley gentleman entertained Charles, Prince of Wales, at the time of his son's birth.' Shakespeare, who probably had many an opportunity of conversing with such professional merry-makers, no doubt drew his outline of their character from personal observation:

'*Jaques.* A fool, a fool; I met a fool in the forest,
A motley fool; a miserable world!
As I do live by food, I met a fool,
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms, and yet a motley fool.
"Good-morrow, fool," quoth I: "No, sir," quoth he,
"Call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me fortune;"
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says, very wisely, "It is ten o'clock:
Thus may we see," quoth he, "how the world wags;
'Tis but an hour since it was nine,
And after one hour more, 'twill be eleven;
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale." When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,

That fools should be so deep contemplative;
And I did laugh, sans intermission,
An hour by his dial.'*

An entry in the register of St. Giles', Cripplegate, under February 9, 1604, records the burial of one 'William Fox, son of William Fox, mynstrell.' Numbers of minstrels lived in this parish; they were incorporated by King Edward IV., and were frequently admitted to the houses of the great.

It was formerly customary also for the upper servants in great households to be 'persons of gentle blood and slender fortune,' an instance of which occurs in the register of Allhallows, London Wall:

'1598, July 20. M^r^ Randall Crew, Counsellor at the Law in Lincoln's Inn, and M^rs^ Julian Clipsbie, gentlewoman attending on my Lady of Shrewsbury, of this parish, were married.'

Mr. Chester Warters, in his 'Parish Registers,' amongst instances of this usage quotes that of Catharine, wife of John Willson, who addressed a petition in the year 1634 to Lord Cottington, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which she states:

'I am the daughter of George Dyer, late of Grove Park, Warwickshire, who was brother to your Lordship's brother. After my father's death I was for a while brought up by my uncle, George Dyer, and by him put to service to a Mistress, who by a blow struck on my nose dejected my

* 'As You Like It,' Act II., Scene 7.

fortunes in marriage. Ever since I have been enforced to take hard pains for my living, as my poor husband does for his.'

And speaking of servants, it would seem that a bond of apprenticeship was thought worthy of insertion in the parish register. At Frantfield, as early as the year 1604, a case was entered of a servant in husbandry as below :

'1604, 20 July. George Job, with his mother's consent, put himself apprentice to Thomas Page, of Frantfield, for seven years following, being bound with seven single pence. The said Thomas is to teach the said George the full knowledge of husbandry, and to find him sufficient meat, drink, and cloth, linen and woollen, hose and shoes, good lodging, and all things needful for such an apprentice, both in sickness and in health, and to double apparel at the end of his years, and also to give the said George fourpence every quarter ; and to this end the said Thomas hath received of widow Job two good sheep and ten shillings in money. Also the said George is faithfully, honestly, and truly to perform the duties of such servant, in doing his master's business, in keeping his secrets lawful to be kept, in not using to ale-houses, nor unlawful games without his master's consent, and all other duties needful for such a servant, and not to marry without his master's consent.'

And in the register of Elstead, Surrey, is a memorandum, dated 1558, probably made by a son of one of the churchwardens for the time :

'Be it knone that I Rycharde Grover have fully passed out of my yerse of prentyst wyth my

father Johne Grover all thyngs payde and dyscharged the xv daye of August.'

Again in the Sebergham registers there is a curious memorandum, dated May 18, 1776, respecting the duties of householders to the parish in the matter of servants :

'It is agreed by the sixteen met together the sd day that no inhabitant within the sd parish shall take into his or their houses as servants or otherwise any inmates unles the sd inmates at the same time bring with them certificates under the hands of the min^{r} and Churchwardens of y^{e} parishes of their last abode, and that they will receive them again ; or that the person wch so receive any such inmates shall give sufficient security to the parish to indemnify and have harmless the s^{d} parish from any charg or trouble of the s^{d} inmates.'

An interesting instance of an agreement made by a boy's parents with his master and adopted father is recorded in the register of St. Olave's, Old Jewry :

'1591, May 2. Mem. That I William Corsse and Mary Corsse do here, in the parish of St. Olave, this present day, in the presence of us, whose names are here under-written, willingly, freely, and voluntarily, give our son, Pasfeld Corsse, unto John Callcock, of London, Grocer, as freely as it pleased Almighty God to give him unto us, the 14th day of Feb. 1586, being Ash Wednesday, he being five years old and better, and having been with y^{e} said John Callcock now one year. And we promise further not to have to do with our said son Pasfeld during the life of

the said John Callcock, otherwise than to be humble petitioners unto Almighty God for the health of our said dear son, and the prosperity of John Callcock his said master. And in witness of the truth unto these premises we have put our hands the day and year above said,' etc.

In the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, is a fragment of an entry relating apparently to an agreement to pay half a crown, 'beeginning November the 28, and to continue to the day 1696'; and a further memorandum runs thus: 'November the 18 1692: then John Wingate and Thomas Smith hatter agreed by the yeare that Thomas Smith is to find him in hatts for twenty shillings the yeare during life.' This bargain was most likely made at the alehouse, and the parish clerk, being present, undertook to register the agreement.

It is noteworthy that many occupations and trades, some of which have long ceased to exist, are preserved in the parish register. Thus, in that of St. Oswald, Durham, this entry is given: 'Ann, daughter of Thomas Forcer, virginall master, bap. Feb. 14th, 1640.' The term 'virginal master' is now an obsolete term. The virginal was an instrument of the spinet kind, made quite rectangular, like a small pianoforte, probably so called from being used by young girls. In an old play the instrument is thus alluded to: 'This was her schoolmaster, and taught her to play the virginals.'* And an entry in the registers of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, records the burial on

* 'Honest Whore,' iii., 359.

May 29, 1646, of 'William Smith musician which dyd in jayl a musician, which techt childre to play of the virgeners' [virginals].

In the register of St. Peter's, Cornhill, the 'Wey-House' is frequently mentioned, with its officers—master-porter, porter, carter, etc. Stow informs us that on the north side of Lombard Street 'one large house is called the Wey-house, where merchandizes brought from beyond the seas are to be weighed at the King's beame. Sir Thomas Lovell builded this house, which hee gave to the Grocers of London.' Thus, in 1586, on April 9, there was the 'Christening of Edward Green sonne of John Green carter in the Weigh House, born on the 6th daye of Aprill being Thursday'; and on June 29, 1617, there was 'Buried William Whitlocke ye sonne of Robt Whitlocke one of the porters of the Kinges Weighowse pit in ye west yeard.'

Nichols, quoting extracts from the registers of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, notices many occupations as having become obsolete either in effect or in their designations; as, Robert Dorrington, a spurrer, buried 1591; Thomas Suelling, imbroduer, the same year; John Fisher, a shiere grinder, 1592; a comfit-maker, 1597; gonne-makers in 1597 and 1600; Richard Delworth, French hood-maker, 1601; Henry Bateman, a barber-surgion, buried September 27; Walter Shrawley, girdler. In 1590 occurs the trade of pulter (not poulterer), and frequently that of upholster (not upholsterer). Water-bearers, again, are of constant occurrence, and in the year 1603 was buried 'Daniel Hill,

Pannyer-man of the Middle Temple.' Then we meet with, in the year 1599, a 'dreaman,' and in 1600 with an 'ale-bruer.' An entry in the year 1608 speaks of a 'woodmonger,' and reference is made to a 'tomb-maker.'

'The Writer of the Court Letter' was the designation of a scrivener prior to the grant of the royal charter in the year 1616, an allusion to which occurs in the registers of St. Mary Woolnoth ; and amongst the many other obsolete terms found in this register may be mentioned 'pasteler,' 'gongfarmer,' and 'pryntagger.'

Another personage who was by virtue of his trade somewhat notorious in the seventeenth century was the saltpetre-man, the burial of a man of this description being recorded in the register of St. Nicholas', Durham: 'John Haward, Saltpetre-man, bur. 9 Sept., 1602.' 'Before the discovery and importation of Indian nitre, saltpetre was manufactured from earth impregnated with animal matter, and, being the chief ingredient of gunpowder, was claimed in most countries as a State monopoly. Patents for making saltpetre were expressly exempted in 1624 from the statute against monopolies, and the saltpetre-man was empowered to break open all premises, and to dig up the floors of stables, and even dwelling-houses.' But this vexatious prerogative of the Crown was annulled in 1656, when it was enacted that no saltpetre-man should dig within any houses or lands without previously obtaining the leave of the owner.

Then we find 'lutenists,' 'fidlers,' and 'musi-

tians' spoken of; and in one register the burial of 'a singing man' is mentioned, and in the register of St. Mary-le-Bow, Durham, there is entered the burial of 'Mr. Thomas Edlin, a strainger, one which taught to dance.' Occasionally the antiquated mode of spelling is noticeable, such as 'upholster,' 'pictor-maker,' and 'aquavity-man,' or seller of drams. In days past the term 'aqua-vitæ' was in use as a general phrase for ardent spirits, and as such occurs in 'Twelfth Night' (Act II., Scene 5), where Maria asks, 'Does it work upon him?' to which Sir Toby replies, 'Like aqua-vitæ with a midwife.' According to Fosbroke, aqua-vitæ was made and sold by barbers and barber-surgeons. Ben Jonson speaks of selling 'the dole beer to aqua-vitæ men,' and in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Beggar's Bush' the cry of the aqua-vitæ man is, 'Buy any brand wine, buy any brand wine.' It is such a person who is indicated in the following entry from the register of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, where on June 8, 1617, the burial is recorded of 'the daughter of Richard Michell, aquavity-man.' According to Malcolm, several aqua-vitæ dealers lived in this parish, and he adds that the nature of this beverage may be imagined from the following 'Reasons for the Grauntes unto Mr. Drake, for the making of aquavite, aqua composita, berevinger, beereeger, and alliger.

'That whereas dyversse of greedye and covetous myndes, for their owne lucre and gaine—w'hout the dew regarde of the health and wellfayre of our subjects, or the p'fit and benefit w^{h} may grow to

us and our Comonwealth, by the trew and right making of the same of trew and wholsome lyquor —have, do use make the foresayde drynkes and sauces of most corrupt, noysom, and lothsom stuff; viz., the washing tonnes, colebacks, laggedragge, tylts, and droppings of tappes, and such other noysom stuff used in tymes past to feed swyne.'

Mention is made in the Nantwich registers of a resident jockey, dancing-masters, and comedians, which is interesting, associated as they were with the gaieties and amusements of the town in former days; and in the same registers early notices occur of the Post-Office, such entries as the following occurring:

'1621. March 13. Thomas Cheshire, a letter bearer.' [Buried.]

'1622. Ap. 12. Mr. Roger Mainwaring, Post maister.' [Buried.]

'1635. Feb. 19. Elizabeth, wife of Mathew Alvaston, foote-post.' [Buried.]

The way in which our forefathers occasionally settled their local differences in days of old is certainly worthy of imitation nowadays. An entry in the Twickenham register, dated April 3, 1568, tells us how 'in the presence of the hole paryshe of Twycknam was agreement made betwyxt M^r^ Packer and his wyffe, and Hewe Rytte and Sicylye Daye upon the aforesaid Mr. Packer'; and another entry, of April 10 of the same year, records a similar agreement made between Thomas Whytt and James Herne, who 'have consented that whosoever geveth occasion of the breaking of Christian love and charyty betwixt them, to forfeit

to the poor of the paryshe three shillings and fourpence, being dewlye proved.'

This wholesome practice of making up quarrels, without having recourse to law, may be traced to the fourteenth century, for it is recorded that in the year 1363, when John de l'Isle, the grandson of Sir John de Bohun of Midhurst, the patron of Eastbourne Priory, made proof of his majority, one of the witnesses deposed that 'a great quarrel between John de l'Isle the father and Richard Broker was made upon the Sunday after the child was born, as it is enrolled in the missal of Eastbourne Church.' The parish priest, therefore, was in the true sense of the term a peace-maker, and when he was successful in making up quarrels between his angry parishioners, such an event was often noted in the register.

But, unfortunately, quarrels and disagreements were not always so amicably settled, as may be gathered from a curious entry made in the parish register of Islington, which runs thus: 'Sir George Wharton, son of Lord Wharton, was buried, the 10th November, 1609. James Steward Esqre, godsonne to King James, was buried the 10th November, 1609.' These two persons were both servants to James I., and some reproachful words having passed between them, they fought a duel near Islington, and were both killed. It is said that when the King heard of this sad affair he was much distressed, and ordered them to be buried in one grave. There was published at the time 'a lamentable Ballad of a Combate lately fought near London between Sr James Steward and Sr George

Wharton, knights, who were both slaine at that time.' But Islington seems to have been remarkably fatal to the duellists of that day, for the following year, under April 22, 1610, an entry informs us that John Egerton, son of Sir John Egerton, Knight, was buried. Mr. Egerton was killed in a duel on April 20, and is said to have been slain 'basely by his antagonist one Edward Morgan who was himself sorely hurt.'*

A singular duel is described in the register of Tottenham. It appears that on Thursday, being November 8, 'there was a meeting of the neighbours to warme Mr John Syms, his house, the Signe of the Swanne at High Cross, among whom came John Nelham and John Whiston, who having some grudge or quarrell between them, dinner being done, they two did use som private speches within themselves; taking leave of the company, went to their houses, either of them taking his pickstafe in their handes, mett in a field behinde Mr Edward Barkham's house, commonly caull'd or knowne by the name of Baldwin's, theare they two fought till John Nelham receyed a wound by John Whiston in his throate, fell down dead, and never spake word after; so the coroner, upon the Saturdie next sate upon him; was burried the same daie being the 10th of November, 1610.'

In the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, under March 8, 1696, this entry occurs:

'Then Mr Fiche Rooke and a Ensigne his name was Antho Buckeredg they fought a duell in the

* Nelson's 'History and Antiquities of Islington,' 1823, pp. 334, 335.

North Homlbes and boath dyed in the ffield : Colonel name he be : longue to was Marques Depusaw.'

On this entry Mr. Joseph Meadows Cowper writes : '"Anthony Buckeridge, an Ensigne," was buried in St. Alphage churchyard, March 9, 1696-7, and Finch Rooke was buried at St. Paul's. In neither case is any reference made to the cause of death ; and the sole memorial that remains is a small stone in the wall by the North Holmes. This stone, much defaced, is near the eastern jamb of a bricked-up gateway, by which egress was obtainable from the orchard—now Major Plummer's—to the footpath leading from St. Martin's Church to St. Gregory's. The inscription on the stone, as I read it, is as under :

July
Rooke
Died 1696
Bucker[idge].

'So far, I have failed to find any record or otherwise of the duel. I have been referred to "Tales of a Cabin," but the story as therein related is absurdly wrong and utterly valueless, unless we accept as traditionary the statement that two men fought in the night and without seconds, and that nothing was known until their dead bodies were discovered in the early morning.'*

The following extract from a letter which appeared in the *Standard* is of interest, as referring

* 'Registers of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury.' Introduction, pp. iv, v.

to a duel, and to the disappearance of the old register in which it was recorded :

'In the days of Charles I., Giles Nanfan, who then resided at the old manor-house of Bistmorton Court, in this neighbourhood, fought a duel with the lover of his sister Bridget, and slew him. We know the "Bloody Meadow" where the duel was fought, and how the unfortunate lover was buried in the Berrow Churchyard, the parish in which he was killed, and Bridget Nanfan left a charge upon the "Bloody Meadow" by will, for the preaching of a sermon by after incumbents against the sin of duelling. But we did not know the name of the lover who was killed, or the time when the duel took place. Some years ago I went, accompanied by Sir William Guise, to examine the parish registers respecting the name and the date of the burial of Bridget Nanfan's lover. We found the entry, and I made a copy, which was lost. Years after . . . again I went with Sir Wm. Guise to examine the registers of the period, but the book had disappeared altogether, and was nowhere to be found.'

Much valuable matter treating of the social life of the sixteenth century, as far as the poor were concerned, is found in parish documents. Here, for instance, is a picture of London life taken from the registers of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West :

'1573. Jan. 5. a poore man buryed out of the pride.'

'1586. Feb. 9 a maide buried out of the fielde.'

'1589. March 18 a poor maide that died in the fielde.'

'1593. Nov. 20. a childe that died in the fielde.

And other entries speak of women confined 'in the fields' which surrounded Lincoln's Inn, where the poor creatures were in the habit of seeking shelter; for, by a mistaken policy, any increase of building was put down by law.

Gardens, too, in Chancery Lane are frequently mentioned, and in the year 1609 we meet with 'the gardens in Fewter Lane.' Stowe, speaking of this locality, says: 'Fewter Lane stretched south into Fleet Street, by the east end of St. Dunstanes Church, and is so called of *Fewters* — or idle people — lying there, as in a way leading to gardens; but the same is now of later yeares on both sides builded thorow with many fair houses.' Indeed, as Nichols remarks, 'not only were there so many utterly houseless, who encountered their death in the open air, and several in stables, "backsides," and outhouses; but at a time when the increase of buildings was forbidden, it would appear that the cellars occasionally formed distinct tenements for some of the crowded population.' This was literally true, for the very cellars were overcrowded, and we find people dying in the barns and in the streets. But as early as the year 1557 the severe distress which was prevalent is shown by such touching entries in the register of St. Margaret's, Westminster, as 'died of very poverty,' of 'very famine' after the name.*

Sometimes, as in the Greystoke registers, the phrase 'who died of want of means to live' occurs,

* See *Fraser's Magazine:* 'Parish Registers: their History and Contents,' September, 1861, p. 362.

and under March 27, 1623, it is recorded, 'the same daye buried a poore hunger sterven begor child Dorothie the daughter of Henry Patterson, Miller.' And another entry in the same register, dated March, $158\frac{7}{8}$, is to this effect: 'Tewsday, the xii day was buried one ppofer Buckbarrow w^{ch} went about for god sake.' The same phrase occurs again in the year 1602, applied to a 'poore woman'; both were, in all probability, licensed beggars.

Pensioners, both male and female, occasionally occur in St. Dunstan's registers, and an almshouse was established in the Friars, which is mentioned in the entries below:

'1593. June 11. Agnes Grandige, one of the sisters of the fryers.'

'1608. July 30. Joane Dennys, vidowe, out of the almes house in the Friers.'

'1603. March 23. Anne Pilsworth, one of the 7 sisters in the Fryers.'

It may be noted that the Friars—sometimes designated the White Friars—was the site of the house of the Carmelites, placed on the south side of Fleet Street. As a sanctuary for debtors, and the consequent resort of dissolute characters, it subsequently became notorious, and under the slang name of Alsatia its fame has been widely spread by Sir Walter Scott's 'Fortunes of Nigel.' It was not, however, entirely given up to the lower classes; for, as Stowe says, 'in place of this Friers Church, bee now many faire houses builded, lodgings for noblemen and others.'

Another locality inhabited by very poor persons,

but not as almsfolk, was called St. Dunstan's Hall. Thus, on September 4, 1593, one John Miller was buryed out of St. Dunstan's Hall; and on August 18, 1603, 'Roger Brooke, Waterman, out of St. Dunstan's Hall.'*

Occasionally, when any deserving case that seemed worthy of support was brought under the parson's notice, he made a memorandum of the same in his register. Thus, in one of the Knaresborough registers there is entered an appeal to the benevolent from one Richard Coates, which is couched in the following terms:

'The bearer Richard Coates, a taylor by his trade, but being overcharged by a great many children was forced to take up another method to get his Bread. Which is so publickly known it needs no further demonstration. In which way, for ease and readinesse of going to the adjoins markets, he kept a little Horse which was stoln from him about —— months ago, and not finding him, by all enquiry he can make, has brought the Justice of Peace to give him Leave to begg the Charitable Constitution of this neighbourhood only to help to gett another. And if you please to grant this Favour, he, as in duty bound, shall hold himself under great obligation,' etc.

But in the same register we find an application to the Commissioners of H.M. Revenue duly entered, which is a somewhat unique memorandum. It runs thus: 'To the Hon^ble Com^rs and Gov^rs of his Ma^ties Revenues of Excise of Beer & Malt &c.

* Nichols, 'Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica,' vol. v., pp. 3, 4.

'These are to certifye that Joseph Leeming in the p^ish^ of Knaresburgh in the County of York, is a likely man to make a good officer, is a Brisk healthy man, not incumbered with debts, a young man, unmarried, about one-and-twenty years of age, of a good family, sober life and conversation, well affected to the pres^nt^ Goven^t^, of the Communion of ye Church of England & bred a grocer. Proposeth for his securities M^r^ James Collins and M^r^ W^m^ Broadbett of Knar. afors^d^. He desires to be instructed by Bernard Calvert, officer of Knaresborough.

'These are to Certifye, whom it may concern that Joseph, son of Joseph Leeming, was Baptized at Knar. in Yorkshire ye 11 day of June 1686.'*

The number of persons, again, slain in brawls at inns and taverns, and in the streets, in olden days, is noteworthy. Thus, referring once more to the register of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, we find entries of this kind:

'1572. Aug. 22. Luce, which was slain at hearnes the Cooke in Chancery Lane.'

'1579. June 20. M^r^ Marten which was slain at Lyons Inne.'

'1592. April 19. Will'm Gifford slaine in Symon Canon's house.'

And on January 5, 1595, according to the registers of St. Mary Woolnoth, William Backe, 'one of her Majesty's servauntes of the Guarde was slaine in the Taverne called by the name of the Bishopp's Head.'

* See 'Yorkshire Registers,' the *Antiquary*, 1882, vol. vi., pp. 190, 191.

Under 1610 the register of St. Gregory-by-Paul's gives this entry: 'John Fitzwilliams, servant to Sir Edward Dymmocke, Knight, slain in a Tavern, buried 14 February, 1610.'

And after this fashion the entries in our London registers proceed, proving how powerless was the arm of the law. Drink is also mentioned as an evil in the seventeenth century, and the register of St. Benedict Fink has a curious memorandum, dated April 23, 1673, concerning the death of 'Mr. Thomas Sharrow, clothworker, late Churchwarden of this parish, killed by an accidental fall in a vault, in London Wall, Amen Corner, by Paternoster Row, and who it was supposed had lain there eleven days and nights before anyone could tell where he was. Let all who read this take heed of drink.' We may compare, too, an entry in the register of Newington Butts: '1689, John Anis and Derwick Farlin in one grave, being both Dutch soldiers; one killed the other drinking brandy, buried Nov. 1st.' And at Rye, under December 2, 1656, a memorandum informs us how Francis Gill and William Grogervill, two soldiers on guard at Strandgate, broke open a cellar, and drank so much strong waters as made six men dead drunk. Grogervill never came to himself, and Gill, the corporal, going his rounds, fell down and broke his skull. They were buried together in one grave, no shot fired over them, and no one attending but the bearers. These men, by thus bringing themselves to a disgraceful end, were thus buried 'without those honours usually paid to meritorious soldiers.' Another case is entered in the registers

of Croydon, under 1585, where this memorandum is given:

'William Barker, a comon drunkard and blasphemer, beinge drinkinge tyll he was drunken, was found dead on the xixth day of September, he beinge soe he was layd in a grave, and not cov'ed tyll the xxij day of the same month for the coroner to vew (& then cov'ed).'

And an entry in the register of Burbage, Wiltshire, under February 11, 1648-49, records the burial of 'a souldier that had been drinking hot water and fell off his horse.'

A curious bet, which was attended with a fatal ending, is recorded in the old register of Hawkshead, and runs thus:

'1689. Decr. 16. Bernard Swainson who was Edward Braithwaites apprentice went with William Stamper a great while within nights into William Braithwait shopp in Hawkshead for to beare him company a little, and at their meeting these three young youths were all very sober and in good health and about . . . o' th Clocke o' th nighte they made a bett that if this Bernard Swainson could drinke off nyne noggins of Brandy that William Braithwaite and William Stamper was to pay for them, but if Bernard fayled and could not drinke off nyne noggins of Brandy then hee was to pay of his owne charges for that hee drunke; now this Bernard drank off those nine noggins of Brandy quickly, and shortly after that fell down upon the floore and was straightway carried to his bed where hee lay five and twenty hours, during which tyme hee could never speake;

nor never did knowe anybody though many came to see him and soe he died.'

It does honour to the memory of Thomas Percy, the author of 'Reliques of English Poetry,' to find him usefully employed in preserving the humble annals of his parish for the benefit of those that should come after him. The title-page to the registers bears the following inscription in his own hand: 'These old registers were rescued from destruction, and for their further preservation gathered into this volume in 1767;' and at the end of the volume is a fragment of an ancient book of rates, which was thought a curiosity that deserved to be preserved:

'*Memorandum.*

'Feb. 25th 1767. This day I transcribed into the three following Leaves of Parchment all the Articles of Births, Baptisms, and Burials, during the years 1756-1766 (inclusive) which I found entered in a Paper Register of the Baptisms and Burials of this parish of Wilbye, viz.—all that happened since I have been Rector of this Parish; and after a very exact collation of this copy with the said originals, I hereby declare it to be very correct and perfect.'

The 'fragment' of the 'ancient book of rates' contains many curious and interesting entries relating to the period when the Court of Charles I. took up its abode at Wellingborough, in order that the Queen might drink the chalybeate water of the 'red well.' And it appears from them—

some of which we quote below—that the adjoining parish of Wilby was laid under contribution for the supplies of Her Majesty's household:

'A levy made for the 16th July, 1627, for her Majesties household, at xij a yard land—sum total - - - - - -	xxxiij^{s}	xi^{d}
1627. Layings out for her Majesties house.		
Sc. Payd for carrying six chicken and a capon to Wellingborougge - -		iiij^{d}
It. Payd for carring four strikes of wheat to ye Courte - - - - - -		vj^{d}
It. Payd for six chickens and a capon -	iiij^{s}	
It. Payd to Thomas Hericke for driving a load of Charcole to the Courte - -		xij^{d}
It. Payd for twenty pound of butter -	vj^{s}	viij^{d}
It. Payd for the caridge of the same -		iiij^{d}.
It. Payd to the Ringer when her Majestie went through the town to Northton -		vj^{d}
It. Payd to six women for gatheringe rushes (?) - - - - - - -		xij^{d}
It. Payd for tow quarter of oates - -	xxi^{s}	iiij^{d}
It. Payd for a load of wood for the Courte - - - - - - -		viij^{d}
To the men to load the wood, and goinge to Wellingborough wth it - - -		viij^{d}
Sum totl - - -	xliij^{s}	iiii^{d}'



CHAPTER X.

PARISH CUSTOMS.

THE old custom of ringing the curfew-bell, which Milton has gracefully described—

> 'On a plat of rising ground,
> I hear the far-off curfew sound,
> Over some wide, watered shore,
> Swinging slow, with solemn roar'—

is still kept up in a few villages. For many years past the practice has been kept up at St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe, Kent, during the winter months, with regard to the due ringing of which there is an entry in the register, the minute of a vestry meeting held in the month of September, 1696:

'Whereas there has been, and is at this time a parcel of land in this parish, called by the name of the "Curfew Land," consisting of five rods more or less; which for some time since hath been given by a shepherd, who one night fell over the Cliff, yet lived so long as to make the said bequest for ringing of a Curfew-bell at Eight of the Clock every night for the Winter half-yeare, viz., from

Michælmas Day to Lady Day ; and now, finding the great neglect for some yeares past in the due ringing thereof, and to prevent, for the future, any danger which may ensue to travellers and others being so near the Cliffe, for want of the due and constant ringing, if possible the like sad Providence may not befall any others,— we the Minister, Churchwardens, and others, the Parishioners, whose names are underwritten, in reference to the performance of the donor's good intent, do hereby order and decree that the said Curfew Bell be hereafter rung—as at the neighbouring parishes it is—constantly every night in the week, all the aforesaid winter half-yeare, the full time of a quarter of an hour at the least, without any exceptions of Sunday nights or Holy-day nights, and he that rings is to have and receive the benefit and profit of the said Curfew-Land, provided that he whoever is or shall be Clerk of the Parish shall have the refusal of it before any other, if he will accordingly perform the contents above specified. But, if not, then it shall be at the Minister's and Churchwardens' disposal to let any other have it, who will ring it accordingly. And in case it shall not be constantly rung, as is afore specified, it shall be lawful for the said Minister and Churchwardens to receive the rent from him who occupies the said land, and to deduct out of it, for every night it shall not be rung, two pence for any commission which shall be given to the poor that come constantly to Church.'

There are numerous traditions to the same purport, and one current at Barton, Lincolnshire,

tells how an old lady, being accidentally benighted on the wolds, was directed on her journey by the ringing of the evening bell of St. Peter's Church. Out of gratitude for arriving at her destination in safety, she gave a certain piece of land to the parish clerk, on condition that he should ring one of the church bells from seven to eight every evening, except Sundays, commencing on the day of the carrying of the first load of barley in every year, till Shrove Tuesday next ensuing inclusive.

A curious little incident connected with the ringing of the curfew is recorded in the register of Penn, Staffordshire:

'1750, March 25. Mary Penn, foundling, bapt. The child was found tied up in a cloth, and hung to the ring upon the south door of Penn Church, about eight o'clock p.m. by William Baker, as he was coming out of church after the ringing of the Curfew Bell.'

And in connection with bell-ringing, may be quoted a memorandum in the Leyland registers, relative to the fees of ringers, similar regulations occasionally occurring in other registers:

'November the 4th 1664.

'It is concluded upon by Mr. Rothwell Vicar and the Churchwardens now in being that the ringers appointed by them shall obserue to ringe in due time on Sundaies and take the benefit of ringing at Burialls and other times to bee diuided amongst them by equall portions and received and distributed by Peter Tootell Clarke or Robert Sargeant and hereunto the ringers doe subscribe their names the day and year aboue written.'

Among the old entries in church books, reference is occasionally made to the parish bull, a charge having been levied upon the parson for keeping a bull for the use of his parishioners. As the Rector was entitled to the tithe of calves, it was to his interest to promote increase of tithable produce. A correspondent of *Notes and Queries* (5th S., x. 334), says that, 'by custom of the parish of Quarley, Hants, the parson was bound to keep a public boar and bull for the use of the parish This he had neglected to do, whereupon his parishioners refused to give him the tithe of milk.' A memorandum dated April, 1683, at St. Nicholas', Durham, affirms that 'it is ordered that Simors Lackenby is to keep in lieu of his Entercommon ground, one sufficient Bull for the use of the City and Borough kyne, for three years next ensuing; and to give ten shillings towards a silver plate for a Course.' From a copy of a Court Roll of the Manor of Isleworth Syon, dated September 29, 1675, it appears that Thomas Cole surrendered four acres and one rood of customary land lying in several places in the fields of Twickenham, called the Parish Land, anciently belonging to the inhabitants of Twickenham, for keeping a bull for the common use of the inhabitants in trust for the use of the said inhabitants, for keeping and maintaining a sufficient bull for the use aforesaid.*

The baiting of a lion, too, was an event not to be despised, and in the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, this entry is given:

* See Edwards, 'Remarkable Charities,' p. 66.

'December the : 6 : 1687. Then the lion was baited to death in the White Hart Yarde with dogges.'

Great attention was paid, in days gone by, to preserving the parish boundaries, disputes relating to which were not of infrequent occurrence. Hence, the custom of beating the parish bounds is occasionally noticed in church-books, the subjoined memorandum occurring in the register of Arlingham:

'Mem.—that I, Henry Childe, Vicar of Arlingham, went in perambulation with some of my parishioners, on Rogation Monday and Tuesday, 1606. Upon the Tuesday I went to the utmost confines of our parish, eastward and from north to south, not for any superstitious sake, but to see the bounds of the parish.'

And we may also quote 'a true account of the bownds of the parish of Ringmer, taken by M^r^ John Lillie, Vicar, with several of the parishioners in rogation week, being the 14^th^ 15^th^ and 16^th^ dayes of May 1683.' The procession was as follows:

'Monday y^e^ 14^th^ of May, after divine service at our parish church, we went from thence along the King's highway, to a place called Stone Street * * * And over the hedge at a Crab Tree. * * * From thence we went to the house of M^r^ Henry Plummer, where both men and boys were worthily entertained at a plentiful good dinner, and thus ended our first day's perambulation.'

The second day they ended at the house of Lady Springett, 'where there was a collation provided for the parishioners, and soe ended the second day's perambulation.'

The close of the third day, it seems, brought them back to the Crab Tree, at which place 'wee sange a psalm, and our Minister read the Epistle and Gospel, to request and supplicate the blessing of God upon the fruites of the Earth. There did M^r^ Richard Gunn, by reason of his building a new apartment to his house at Middleham, invite all the company to the Clerk's house, where he expended at his own charge a barrell of beer, besides a plentiful supply of provisions brought from his own house ; and so ended our third and last day's perambulation.'

The register of Radipole, Dorchester, contains an account of the perambulations made by the parish officers periodically for the purpose of ascertaining the bounds of the parish ; and on Ascension Day, 1747, 'after morning prayer at Turnworth Church [Dorset], was made a publick Perambulation of y^e^ bounds of y^e^ parish of Turnworth by one Richd. Cobbe, Vicar, W^m^ Northover, Churchwarden, Henry Sillers and Richard Mullen, Overseers, and others, with 4 boys ; beginning at the Church Hatch and cutting a great T on the most principal parts of the bounds. Whipping y^e^ boys by way of remembrance, and stopping their cry with some half-pence ; he returned to church again, which Perambulation and Possessioning had not been made for 25 years last past.'

On May 14, 1706, the parson of Collingbourne Ducis duly attended the beating of the parish boundaries, and has made in his register the following memorandum on the event :

'I made a perambulation round my parish,

where we renewed y^e^ old bounds and sett our land marks according to y^e^ directions of some of y^e^ oldest inhabitants who were present. We observed y^t^ y^e^ bridge over ye brooke between Sunton Collingborn and us stands within ye limits of our parish, but this is only upon leave given, and ye inhabitants of Sunton are obliged to renew and repair ye s^d^ bridge whenever it wants either repairing or renewal. Ita est. Guil. Sherwin. Rector.'

Occasionally interesting details are given respecting old parish charities. At Wilmington, Kent, a copy of a terrier is entered in the register, wherein it is stated that from the establishment of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester, in the time of Henry VIII., in their leases of the parsonages of Sutton and Wilmington, their lessees had covenanted to deliver to the parishioners of Sutton and Wilmington a certain quantity of wheat and grain at Eastertide annually, to be distributed by the churchwardens of these parishes to the needy persons within the same; and that in their lease of the said rectories, granted November 25, 1772, the lessee covenanted to deliver twenty bushels of peas to be distributed amongst the most needy persons in Sutton, and twelve bushels of peas amongst the like persons in Wilmington; and also to deliver three bushels of wheat, to be distributed amongst the poor of Sutton and Wilmington; and it is added that the usage had been for the poor of Wilmington to receive only one out of the three bushels of wheat.*

* See Edwards, 'Remarkable Charities,' 1842, p. 32.

It is stated in the register of Harlington, Middlesex, under the year 1683, that half an acre of land was given by some person, whose name was forgotten. But, it adds, it has always been understood that this piece of land was given for the benefit of the bell-ringers of the parish, to provide them with a leg of pork on November 5. The ground is known as the Pork Acre, and used to be let for fifty shillings a year, which was paid by the parish officers to the bell-ringers.

Similarly, the old register of Bushey, Hertfordshire, informs us that a 'M^r^ Gale gave a Haberdine fish [barrelled cod, so called from Aberdeen, which was formerly famous for curing this kind of fish] & half a peck of blue peas, to twenty widows and widowers once a year. Half a peck loaf and two pounds of cheese to each person are given instead.' In the Parliamentary Report on Charities, made some years ago, it was stated that the owner of a field, consisting of about five acres, lying in the parish of Bushey, was in the habit of distributing annually, some time in Lent, forty quartern loaves and forty pounds of cheese among twenty widows and twenty widowers of the parish selected by the Rector.

And in one of the Hayton parish registers this memorandum is given :

'John Hall of the Head's Nook, by his last will and testament, left to the Parishioners of Head's Nook, Faugh, and Moss (Know?) the sum of five pounds, the use whereof was to be 12d. the pound yearly, and to defray the charges of church repairs for the three townships afore-

said, so far as it extends: and Isaak Hall, son of the said John Hall, hath this day entered into security to pay to the Churchwardens of Hayton Parish, or any one of them successively, the sum of five shillings yearly after the date hereof, and hereby binds his heirs and executors to do so. In witness whereof the said Isaak Hall hath hereunto put his hand this September the 23, 1706.'

Further, the register of Croydon tells us how 'Francis Tyrrell, citizen and merchant of London was buried the 1st of September, 1609, and his funeral kept at London the 13th of the same month. He gave £200 to the parishioners of Croydon, to build a new market-house, and £40 to repair our church, and 40s. a year to our poor of Croydon, for eighteen years, with manie other good and great legacies to the Citie of London.'

And an ancient register-book has the following memorandum relative to the little almshouses at Croydon, which is interesting:

'June 24th being Mydsomr day Anno D'ni 1583 Anno regni regine Elizabethe 25.

'Memorandu' that the day and yeare above written, Edmunde Grendall, Archbishop of Canterbury his grace, gave Fyftye Poundes of good and lawfull mony of Englande—at the request of Mrs. Jenkenson, the wife of James Jenkenson, keeper of my L. palace in Croydon—unto Samuell Fynche, Vycar, John Dannet, gentm, George Butler, gent., George Myller, yeoman, Churchwarden at same tyme, Richarde Plasted, gent., John Hornden, yeoman, and Robert Hugh, yeoman, and James Jenkenson aforesaid, to be bestowed upon a

purchase for the yearly reliefe of the Lyttle Almes House. The aforesaid some paid in Mr Jenkenson's house by Thomas Bellarde, servant to Mr John Scott, stewarde to my L. grace. Also Mr Dannet did possess the same some.

'November xjth anno predicto. The s'd s'm of monie was delyvered unto John Hatcher of Waddon by the said Mr Dannet, in the presence of Samuel Finch, Vicar, etc. . . . In and upon Consideration whereof the said John Hatcher yealded and gave up the ryte and tytle of the mansion house in Waddon, wth the appurtenances thereto belonging, into the hande of two of the lordes Tenauntes of the Manor of Waddon . . . to the use of the Little Almes house. In manner & form followinge, viz, that the said John Hatcher shall have his dwelling, in and upon the said house & the appurtenences during his naturall lyfe, his wife likewise during her naturall life, his daughter Julyane during her naturall lyfe, yelding and payinge therfor yearly to the aforesaids tenaunts or their heires & executers iijli at iiijor usuall feastes, that is to say, the feast of Christmas xvs at the feast of th' Annonciation, xvs at the feast of Midsummer xvs and at the feast of Michælmas xvs by even portions, & if the said John Hatcher, his wife, or his daughter, or the longest liver of them iij, do not dwell on it themselves, or shall not maintaine it in sufficient reparacons, or shall be behind in the payment of the said monie in part or in all or wthin seven daies after anie of the said termes; that then it shall be lawful for the tenauntes thereof to enter in &

upon the said howse wth th' appurtenences to the behouf of the said Little Alms house as then done. And notwithstanding, after the death of John Hatcher, his wife, or the longest liver of them three, the said howse wth the apurten'ces theare in, belonge to the sayd tenaunts to behof of the little Almshoose for ev^{r}.'

And on a fly-leaf of one of the registers of the same parish this memorandum occurs :

'An acre of land belonging to the Vicaridge of Croydon lyes in lane field near Ham farme, and shootes east and west. At the upper end whereof grows an oke on the south, and another oke on the north, bounding it on both sides from Sir Tho. Walsingham's land. On the lower end thereat is an oke on the north side towards the hedge, and somewhat higher towards the east grows a ferne tree w^{ch} stands upon the Vicaridge acre about some six foote from the furrow. Viewed & subscribed by Sam. Barnard, Eccles. Croyd. past^{r}.'

Again, in the year 1614 it appears that Mr. Robert Smyth founded a free school in Market Harborough, and in the old register are the following directions given by him for the building thereof:

'Whereas a school-house in Market Harborough is intended to be built, to stand upon posts or columns, over a part of the market-place, to keep the market-people dry in time of foul weather. Forasmuch as the Right Worshipful the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Oxford are patrons of this place, and have

cause sometimes to visit here; they are humbly hereby intreated, that they will be pleased to visit the school also, and to be favourable to good scholars which shall be trained up here; and shall be found fit to be perfected, and want means and friends for their preferment.

'A deed from the right honble lord Stanhope, lord of the manor to twelve inhabitants of this town, concerning liberty to build a school house there, is depos'ed in a box in the Chest of this Chapel, and is registered in the Guildhall, in London, and to be registered in Christ Church in Oxford, in the eighth year of the reign of King James. Those that shall survive are to be remembered to convey their interest to other inhabitants, and like to continue dwellers in the Town, when the number shall by death or otherwise come to four, or sooner if they shall find cause. Those who shall survey and direct the building are entreated to be careful that it be strong and plain, and that the main bearing posts be set upon stone, somewhat above the ground, and the windows all clear stories. It is conceived that thirty-six feet for the length, and eighteen feet for the breadth, will be a sufficient proportion.'



CHAPTER XI.

SOME CHURCH CUSTOMS.

IN olden times stage plays were performed on a Sunday, not only in the churches, but in the theatres, references to which are frequently made in many old church-account books. The Bewdley chapel-warden's accounts, for instance, give this entry: 'Paid unto the queenes plaiers in the Church, six shillings and eightpence.' And the register of Syston, under the year 1602, contains this item, 'Paid to Lord Morden's players because they should not play in the Church, xij*d*.,' thus showing that the players claimed a sort of prescriptive right to use the house of God for their performances.

But prior to this period several attempts had been made to check this abuse, and Bonner Bishop of London, issued in the year 1542 a proclamation to his clergy, prohibiting all manner of common plays, games, or interludes to be played, set forth, or declared within their churches or chapels.* And the author of a tract published in

* See Kelly's 'Notices of Leicester,' pp. 1-25.

the year 1572 also censures in severe terms the practice of the clergy neglecting their duties, and encouraging stage-plays in churches :

'He again posteth it over as fast as he can gallop ; for he either hath two places to serve, or else there are some games to be played in the afternoon, as lying the whetstone, heathenish dancing of the ring, a beare or bull to be baited, or else jack-an-apes to ryde on horseback, or an interlude to be played, and if no place else can be gotten, it must be done in the church.'

A writer in the *North British Review* for February, 1863 (194), remarks that even in Scotland, 'long after the Reformation, such plays were performed, and sometimes still upon a Sunday, for the people saw no harm in this, and petitioned the National Assembly that it might be allowed. But the Reformed Ministers had now begun to entertain stricter notions of the day of rest, and forbade on that day the performance of plays.'

It may be added that many curious particulars illustrative of the performance of plays in churches, consisting of extracts from the accounts of St. Margaret's Church, Southwark, will be found in the Shakespeare Society Papers (III.), contributed by Mr. J. Payne Collier, who also communicates a note that 'on June 7th, 1483, the citizens of Lincoln had leave to perform a play in the nave of the cathedral, as had been their custom upon the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.'

And from Hayes register it appears that in the eighteenth century the favourite amusement during Divine service was cock-throwing in the church-

yard, once, as it is noted, 'in spite of the justice, minister, parish-officers, and constables.' But two years later things grew far more serious, for the justice gave up the matter. The Rev. C. Manning writes:

'Feb. 27th 1754. Being Shrove Tuesday, Divine service was performed in the afternoon, and no care was taken to prevent the throwing at cocks, rioting, and swearing in the churchyard, at the same time; though I gave previous notice of the same to the churchwardens and the magistrate, and desired that it might be prevented for the honour of God and a public good; but his answer was this:—"I know no law against throwing at cocks, even in the churchyard."'

And from a parish-book belonging to St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, we learn that in the year 1584 the inhabitants of Astley were complained against for playing at bowls on a Sunday. It was ordered that 'they shall adorn and repair their chapel at their own expence, as a commutation.'

But church life was not the same in all parishes, for there is a memorandum, dated 1613, in Buxted register, of the combination of the parishioners for the better observance of the Sabbath. It runs thus:

'Because God hath commanded us to have a care that the Sabbath daye be kept holy, both by ourselves and others, as farre as we are able, therefore, upon consideration that the Lord's Day hath been many and divers ways profaned by unlawful meetings and feastings for manie years past, we, whose names are undersigned, doe give our con-

sente, that for the time to come the parish feaste—commonly called yon faull—shall be kept upon St. James his day, except it fall on the Sabbath; and then it may, and must be kept, if it be kept at all, upon the next day following: and thus desiring God to remember us in his goodnesse; as we desire to keep this day in holinesse after the example of Nehemiah and his people.'

At Spofforth, again, the inhabitants had become so ungodly during the Commonwealth that a meeting was convened, and the Rector, churchwardens, and some of the principal inhabitants drew up a code of laws for the better observance of the Lord's Day. But, unfortunately, owing to damp, some of the words in the register are illegible, the heading and the last of the orders being completely so:

'Spofforth, 14 May, 1654.

'Whereas the [observance] of ye Lord's Day commanded by the Laws of God and enjoyned by sev'all Lawes of this nation hath been of late very much abused and neglected, and apar^ly^ [sever]all abuses and misdemeanours have been comited and doone, in and about the Church and Churchyard of the towne of Spofforth, to prevent the growing evills and the sadd consequencies wh^ch^ may ensue thereupon, it is ordered and agreed by us, whose names are under written, in manner and forme following—

'*I. Concerning y^e^ observation of ye Lord's Day.*—1. It is ordered and agreed that every man shall appear himselfe to sanctifie the Lord's Day

in pietie and true Religion both in Publique & private.

'2 it is ordered and agreed if any butcher wthin this p^{ish} shall, by himselfe or any other, kill any beast or sell any victualls on the Lords day, he shall pay vj^{s} viij^{d} for every such offence.

'3 if any p'son shall exercise or be p'sent at any wrastlings, bowlings, frechings, ringerings . . . or any . . . whatever . . . the like, if he be [over] fifteen years he shall pay . . . for every such ofence, and [if he be under] that age his maister or his parents shall pay twelve pence.

'4 and if any p'son be on the Lord's day in any Inn . . . alehouse or dwellinge house, except for Lodgeinge or for some other ocasion alowed by the Justice, or if he shall be found drinkeinge or p'phaining by swearinge or Raileringe in any of these houses he shall pay 10^{s} and they y^{t} . . . him shall pay 10^{s}.

'5. if any man shall grind or cause to be ground any corne in the mill upon the Lord's day except in case of nessessitie, shall pay 10^{s} for every such offence.

'Item that all head oficers and inferior oficers make diligent search to find out and punish the sev'all ofenders against the several Acts made for the observation of the Lord's day.

'*II. Concern . . . abuses.*—1 it is ordered and agreed that if all p'sons shall demean themselves decently and Reverently in the church.

'2 it is ordered and agreed that if any p'son shall abuse or . . . a dead corps in the church or church yard issuing after the interment, for the

same he shall be ordered at the next sessions following and shall suffer punishment according to Law.

'3 it is ordered and agreed that if any shall Ringe bells for pleasure, on the Lord's day he shall sufer according to Law.

'4 if any man shall Ringe the bells upon ordinarie daies without the consent of y^e^ minister or churchwardeners he shall be indicted for the ofence at the next Sessions following.

'5. it is ordered and agreed that if any man shall send for stronge drinke to tipple in the Church or take to . . . he shall be complaned and sufer punishment for the misdemeanor.

'6. [Illegible].'

Then follow the signatures of the Rector, churchwardens, and twenty-five of the parishioners.*

And, speaking of the observance of the Sabbath, a curious accident, which brought a somewhat severe and uncharitable stricture from the parson, is recorded on a loose leaf in one of the registers of Kirkandrews-upon-Esk:

'Upon Nov. 1. 1696 y^er^ happened a very sad accident 28 people were drowned at Canabie Boat as y^ey^ were passing y^t^ water from church. Six persons come to years of discretion went from y^er^ own church to Canaby. Every soul of y^em^ was drowned. These six lived in my parish. There happened in y^eir^ company two boys of 9 and 11 years old. They were in y^e^ midst of y^e^ pool

* See 'Yorkshire Parish Registers,' the *Antiquary*, 1882, vol. vi., p. 192.

over head and ears in water w^th^ y^e^ rest of y^e^ people y^t^ were drowned and yet by a distinguishing privilege y^esse^ two only got out of y^e^ water safe. Surely God Almighty thereby showed his displeasure to these persons who being of age passed by y^er^ own parish Church to Canaby, but shewed his mercy to y^e^ boys, who knew not w^t^ y^ey^ did but went for company sake. In suffering persons of age y^t^ were of my parish to be drowned and in preserving y^e^ two lads safe even in as great danger in all human probability as y^e^ rest. This is so distinguishing a evidence y^t^ everyone ought to take notice of it, and take heed how they run from y^eir^ own parish Church.'

Another strange accident is incidentally alluded to in the register of burials of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, under October 28, 1623: 'Dorothy, wife of Mathew Sommers. She was slain at a priest's sermon. Mary Clement, waiting-woman to the said Dorothy, slain with her mistress.'

'The horrid accident thus noticed,' writes Malcolm in his 'Londinium Redivivum' (ii. 372), 'occasioned a number of pamphlets, intolerant and bigoted in the extreme; amongst which was, "Something written by occasion of that fatal and memorable accident in the Black Friers on Sunday, being the 26^th^ of October, 1623, *Stilo antiquo*, and the 5^th^ November, *Stilo novo*, or Roman, 1623."'

It appears that a certain Father Drury, a member of the Society of Jesuits, and in priest's orders, had the reputation of being a fervent preacher, and hence drew large congregations, by no means confined to Roman Catholics. One account of the

disaster informs us that over the gateway of the hotel of the French Ambassador, in Blackfriars, which was of stone and brick, was a gallery, or attic story, of 40 feet in length and 17 feet in width, the third in height from the ground. There were two passages to this room, one from the street, the other from the Ambassador's withdrawing-room. The lower floor had a vault of stone. Twelve feet were taken from the length of the gallery by a deal partition, and this apartment served as a vestry-room for the priest; so that an auditory of near 300 persons were compressed within a space but 28 feet in length and 17 feet in breadth. As the architect who erected this building could never have supposed so many people would have assembled in it, he had taken no precautions calculated to sustain so great a weight; on the contrary, it was found that the principal beam of the floor had been almost severed by two mortices facing each other in the centre, leaving little more than 3 inches of solid wood.

A few chairs were occupied by the superior classes of the congregation before the priest, who had a table near him, but the remainder stood literally wedged together. Drury made his appearance, and took his text from the parable of the servant and ten thousand talents, and scarcely half an hour had elapsed when the dreadful catastrophe occurred, which in an instant precipitated the whole mass of unfortunate listeners through a floor beneath them, 'where they were engulphed in a torrent of timber, laths, and dust, after a descent of twenty-

two feet.' Father Drury was killed, and the coroner's inquest examined into the cause of no less than 63 deaths, but it is supposed that between 90 and 100 persons lost their lives.

The keeping of Lent was formerly enforced by proclamation, and an office granting licenses to eat flesh in any part of England was established in St. Paul's Churchyard ; but the relaxation was not unfrequently obtained by a gift of money to the poor. In the register-books of the parish of Prestbury there are appended at the close of the years 1632 and 1633 the licenses granted to sick and aged persons to eat flesh meat during the season of Lent, and numerous entries occur in different registers showing how rigidly the keeping of Lent was enforced. According to Taylor, 'the Water Poet,' the trade of the butchers was at a standstill for six weeks before Easter:

> 'The cut-throat butchers, wanting throats to cut,
> At Lent's approach their bloody shambles shut;
> For forty days their tyranny does cease,
> And men and beasts take truce, and live in peace.'

An entry in the parish register of Newington, Surrey, illustrates the provisions of the law in cases where licenses were granted, and states that a person being 'notoriously sick' is 'to eat flesh this time of Lent during the time of sickness only, according to law in that case provided'; but it adds that during the time of such sickness no 'beef, veale, porke, mutton, or bacon' be eaten. Old age was another ground for obtaining a dispensation from the obligations of the law, and an entry in the register of St. Mary's, Leicester, tells

us that in the year 1618 a license was granted to Lady Barbara Hastings 'to eat flesh in Lent on account of her great age.'

The same license is granted more formally in the following case recorded in the parish register of Staplehurst :

'Be it known unto all men by these presents, that I, James Bowyer, Clarke, and Curate of the Churche of Staplehurst, in the County of Kent, have licensed, and by these presents do license, William Tanner, yeoman, being at this tyme sicke and visited by the mighty hand of God, to eate fleshe, and to use such meates as shall seem best to him for the recovery of his health.'

The register of Wolverton tells us how Sir Thomas Temple had to pay thirteen shillings and fourpence for a license to eat flesh on days prohibited, and a further case may be quoted from the last page of the Bampton register :

'Whereas the Right Worshp[ll] Sir Thomas Hood knight and his worthy lady, having upon undeniable evidence made it appear that they are not in bodily health, and therefore according to the lawe in that case provided have obtained a licence to eat flesh during the time of their Indisposition of bodies ; But since the Date of eight dayes allowed by the Statute is expired, and they are still in a sickly condition, upon their request the said licence is longer indulged them to dress Flesh and accordingly registered. March 18, 1660.'

In spite, however, of the severity of the law, it was not always observed ; for in the 'History of Henley' (1861) a list of persons is given who

were presented (38 Eliz.) for eating flesh in Lent:

'Robt. Chamberlin for roasting a pigg in his house the xxiij. day Marche, w^{ch} was spent at Thomas Seywell's house, the cobbler.

'Henry Wanlar for seething ij p'ce of bacon.'

Turning to Easter, we find from a memorandum in the Tottenham register, dated 1577, that 'the vestry resolved that every parishioner, rich or poor, should at Easter pay quarterage for the Church, and providing bread and wine at the Communion seven-pence, and every person having one or more houses to pay the same for every empty house, and to the Clark's wages such sum or sums according to ancient collection'; and as illustrating Church life in the seventeenth century, we may incidentally quote the subjoined notice from the parish rate-books at Hampsthwaite, published in the year 1786 by the parson for the information of his parishioners as to his arrangements for Eastertide:

'I give notice to all the Parishioners within ye p'ishe of Hampsthwaite that I intend (God willing) to administer ye Blessed Com. on those days following, viz., Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Even, Easter day in the [church], and here will be sermons and homelys on Good Friday and Easter Even by myselfe or some other, and I pray do not drive all till last day. On Tuesday in Passion Week at Thornthwaite Chapel. On Monday morning after Palme Sunday to y^{e} sicke & lame of Holme Sinders Hills.

'On Tuesday morning, before I begin at

Chappell, to the sick and lame people of Thornthwaite & Padside.

'On Wednesday morning to ye sick of y^e^ Hamblett of Birtsw^th^ and felicliffe, and on Thursday morning to y^e^ Hamb^t^ of Hamp. Y^e^ Churchwardens are to give notice y^e^ night before to attend in y^e^ Hambletts.

'I desire all ye p^ish^ioners of this p'ish to take notice & others not of y^e^ p'ish y^t^ are concerned, that they come and reckone and pay y^r^ compts betwixt [now] and Easter day to me or some other I shall appoint. The reck will be taken in y^e^ Church.

'I shall be at home or in ye Church every day after now until Easter except Monday and Tuesday in Passion Week, when I am to be at Lawrence Buck's to reteine y^e^ reck & compts of all persons that live within the compasse of Sinders Hills.

'I desire the Church wardens will take notice, as much as in them lyes, of those persons that do willfully absent y^m^selves from Sacrament, y^t^ are above 16 years of age. I give notice I will take no recks: nor any for me, on Sunday morn: nor on Good Friday morning nor on Saturday morning.

'The Church wardens are to provide bread and wine ag^t^ those days I have appointed, at y^e^ charge of y^e^ p'ish. If any person be able to go or ride to Church or Chappell let them not expect me at their houses.

'A great Sickness I fear this ensuing year. I pray God's Blessing from plag: & pestilnssis—L^d^

grant me health amongst my wife and children, I fear sad things will befall this land this year.'*

But there is nothing to show why the parson felt the anxiety expressed in the last sentences.

To prevent any breach of church discipline by the intrusion of dogs during Divine worship, an official known as the 'dog-whipper' was regularly paid an annual stipend to keep watch, constant allusions to which custom occur in registers and church-books. Thus, at Mary-le-Bow, Durham, under April 6, 1722, the burial of Brian Pearson, the abbey dog-whipper, is recorded; and in the churchwardens' books of the united parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, in the City of London, this entry occurs: 'Item paied for a whip to beate doggs out of the Church, j^{d}.' In some cases charitable bequests were left for the purpose of paying the official in question; as appears from Edwards's 'Remarkable Charities,' where we learn that 'ten shillings a year is paid by the tenant of Sir John Bridges as a charge on lands called "Dog-Whippers' Marsh," containing about two acres, to a person for keeping order in the church during service.' And from the register of Kirkby-Wharfe, Grimston, we gather that three shillings was the amount which the churchwardens paid as the annual salary of the dog-whipper in the years 1705 and 1706; whilst in the year 1711 there was paid to Thomas Pawson, for awakening those who sleep in church, and for whipping dogs out of it, four shillings. One of the parish books of Croft, in Lincolnshire,

* See the *Antiquary*, 1882, vol. vi., p. 191.

records that seven shillings and sixpence was paid 'for dogs wipping' in 1718, whereas from the Castleton parish records we learn that the salary of the sluggard-waker in 1722 was ten shillings. Apropos of this custom, Mr. J. C. Cox informs us that in the church of Baslow, Derbyshire, there still remains the weapon of the ancient parish functionary, the dog-whipper. It was his duty to whip the dogs out of church, and generally to look after the orderly behaviour of both bipeds and quadrupeds during Divine service. The whip in question is a stout lash, some 3 feet in length, fastened to a short ash stick, with leather bound round the handle. We believe it to be a unique curiosity, as we cannot hear of another parish in which the whip is still extant.

There is said, also, to be still in existence in the church of Clynnog Vawr, in North Wales, an instrument for dragging dogs out of church, which has a long pair of curiously shaped tongs with sharp spikes fixed at the ends—an interesting relic of the church discipline of the past.

Similarly, many bequests were made in years gone by for the strewing the church with rushes, a custom which was, it may be remembered, in many country parishes attended with all kinds of festive formalities. In the parish register of Kirkham, Lancashire, are entries to this effect: '1604. Rushes to strew the church cost this year nine shillings and sixpence.' And under the year 1631: 'Paid for carrying the rushes out of the church in sickness time five shillings.' But after the year 1634 disbursements for rushes never

appear in the Kirkham register, when the church was flagged for the first time. In the parish account-books of Hailsham, Sussex, charges occur for strewing the church floor with straw or rushes; and, in accordance with an old bequest, it has been customary for the Mayor to go to St. Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol, on Whit Sunday, when the church is strewn with rushes.

The alteration of the Style of the Calendar is noticed in one of the registers of Kirkandrews-upon-Esk:

'Whereas our old English Stile, or year of our Lord, did not commence till the 25th day of March wch was attend'd with great many Inconveniencys: But by our Act passed in the 24th year of the Reign of King George the Second, and in the year of our Lord 1751. This old Stile ceased; and for the future the first day of January is to be taken deem'd and accounted the first Day of every year. And by the sd Act 11 days in the month of 7ber were annihilated and then the new stile took place. N.B. The 11 days were dropt betwixt 2nd and 14th of 7ber 1752.'

And apropos of this change in the calendar, a curious entry occurs in one of the Glaisdale register books:

'Sept. 2. The new style, or Gregorian account, took place by Act of parliament; so eleven days were cut off or annihilated, and the 2d of September, 1752, was reckoned the 13th, the next day the 14th, and so on. This was well enough till Christmas came, when some would—yea, a great many—keep old Christmas, and some the

new ; nay, the superstitious notion was so prevalent among our moor-folks, that scarce above forty made their appearance at our Sacrament on new Christmas Day, which I could attribute to nothing but superstition and bigotry. Oh, opinion! Oh, conceit!! Oh, ignorance!!!'



CHAPTER XII.

STRANGE NATURAL PHENOMENA.

MANY unusual events connected with our physical and natural history are recorded in the parish register. Indeed, the allusions to storms, earthquakes, meteors, floods, frosts, droughts, and such-like occurrences, constitute one of the most unique and authentic sources of information. Such entries, too, often give the most graphic details of the fearful havoc and destruction caused by these, as they were commonly called, 'visitations of Providence.' Thus, in August, 1577, an alarming thunderstorm, chronicled in the register, occurred at Bungay one Sunday at prayer-time, causing the death of two men in the belfry—an event which gave rise to the wonderful legend of the 'blacke dogge of Bungay,' or the 'divel in such a likenesse,' that ran down the body of St. Mary's with great swiftnesse and incredible haste, 'and wrung the necks of two men.' According to the register of Holy Trinity, Dorchester, on August 22, 1651, 'at night there

was great thunder and lightning, such as had not been known by any living in this age, and there fell with it a great storm of hail, some of the stones of which were seven inches about, with abundance of rain, and it continued all night and great part of next morning till eight or nine of the clock.'

Under July 6, 1666, an entry in Lambeth parish register records the burial of John Ward, who 'was killed with a thunderbolt.' It appears that on July 12, 1787, in the same parish, another death of a similar kind occurred, which is thus described in the *Gentleman's Magazine:*

'July 12, died at his house, near the Bishop's Palace, Lambeth, at about a quarter before six in the evening, by a flash of lightning, Mr. Bacon, Clerk to the Salt Office. At the beginning of the storm he was drinking tea with his wife; the back windows of the one pair of stairs to the south having been open all day, he went up for the purpose of shutting them, and in the action of lifting up his right arm received the stroke, which tore his coat eight inches in length, and four in breadth; whence it entered his right side, nearly opposite his heart, went through his body, and out at the left hip, and down his left leg to his buckle —which melted—and tore the upper leather of the shoe from the sole. His dog being at that foot, was also struck dead; after which the lightning penetrated the wainscot and floor of the one pair of stairs, and made its way into the front parlour, north, where it tore the wainscot in a singular manner, and went off with an explosion

louder than any piece of ordnance. Another account says that he owed his death to a gun being laid across the window, placed there to prevent thieves breaking into the house, which, on this occasion, operated as a conductor for the lightning; for, at the instant he was shutting the window, he received the electrical fire from the barrel of the gun, which he accidentally touched, and was immediately shot dead. The violence of the shock was such that it tore out his intestines, and made his body a most shocking spectacle.'

The unfortunate man was buried in the churchyard, and a monument was erected to his memory with this inscription:

'Near this place are the remains of
William Bacon,
Of the Salt Office, Lond., gent.,
Who was killed by thunder and lightning at his window,
July 12th, 1787,
Aged 34 years.

'By touch ethereal in a moment slain,
He felt the power of death, but not the pain;
Swift as the lightning glanc'd, his spirit flew,
And bade this rough tempestuous world adieu.
Short was his passage to that peaceful shore
Where storms annoy and dangers threat no more.'

At the beginning of the old register of Hawkshead there is this memorandum:

'Bee it remembered that upon the tenth day of June att night in ye yeare of our Lord God one thousand sixe hundred eighty and sixe there was such a fearefull thunder with fyre and rayne which occasioned such a terrible flood as the like of it was

never seene in these parts by noe man liveinge; for it did throw downe some houses and mills and tooke away severall briggs. . . . The water did run through houses and did much hurte to houses; besydes the water washt upp greate trees by the roots, and the becks and gills carried them with other greate trees, stocks and greate stones a greate way off and layd them on men's ground; yea further the water did so fiercely run downe the bye-wayes and made such deepe holes and ditches in them that att severall places neither horse nor foote could passe, and besydes the becks and rivers did soe breake out of their waves as they brought spreadinge greate sand beds into men's ground att many places which did greate hurte the never like was known. I pray God of His greate mercy grant that none which is now living may never see the like againe.'

It is remarkable how frequently destructive storms of this kind are reported to have occurred, producing floods which may well have filled our forefathers with dismay. Thus, the register of Arlingham describes a flood that took place on Tuesday in the forenoon, on January 20, 1606-7:

'There was an exceeding great fludd, and the greater by reason of the south west winde, so hye that one might have morde a boate at Thomas Kinges gate; when many lost their sheepe and other cattle and their goods, Horsecroft and Newbridge being then sowde with wheat, and all overflowde; and had it not been for the C—— boate, which was commonly used upon 10th daye, and in the Tenure of Mr Robert Yate and Thomas ——,

manye about the number of twenty, had lost their lives, or, at the least, binne greatly endangered to be pined or starved to death. Mr Thomas Yate and his eldest son, Mr Richard Yate, were then hemm'd in upon Glass Cliffe with the water. I say it is an admirable memorandum, because it exceeded the fludd that was about forty-six years before a foot and a half at the least higher than it was then. Cursed be the hand that raseth this memorable Recorde out of this Booke. Upon the same day Mrs Anne,— who then was not churched,— for feare of the waters, was with Mr Childe, then Vicar, and his familie, fain to be hurried over with the boate from the Vicaridge. And this day was just three weekes after Elizabeth Childe was born.'*

Another flood on Tuesday, November 4, 1628, is described in a lengthy memorandum: 'Flood over ½ yard high in Vicarage Barn'; and one in the following year, February 3, 1629, 'ranne not into Vicarage.'

'Thrice have I seen a fearful inundation
Within the space of two-and-twentie years,
As few of my coate have in all their station;
Which when it comes (as't will) into men's eares,
What hart so hard that can abstain from teares?
But woe is me that I am first to dwell
Where seas, enradge with windes, so proudlie swell!
God knows who shall survive to see the next—
To be, as I have binne, with feare perplext.'

In June, 1645, a memorandum in the parish register of Loughborough informs us that 'there fell a strange storm in that part of Leicestershire

* See 'Gloucestershire Notes and Queries,' vol. i., p. 246.

which is about Loughborough ; some of the hail-stones were as big as small hens' eggs, and the least as big as musket bullets : it destroyed the corn, and did much hurt in that part of the country where it fell.'

Equally or still more terrific seems to have been a storm of great violence which happened on November 27, 1703, and it is described in the register of St. Oswald, Durham, as 'the greatest hurricane and storm that ever was known in England. Many churches and houses were extreamely shattered, and thousands of trees blown down, thirteen or more of her Maj'ties men of war were cast away, and above two thousand seamen perished in them. N.B. The storm came no further north than Yarmouth. The Bishop of Bath and Wells was killed in his bed, his palace being blown down. And so widespread was the consternation caused by this tempest that it was made the occasion of a public fast which was solemnly kept by royal proclamation on 19th Janry 1704.'

Another memorandum of this storm occurs in the register of Collingbourne Ducis which 'did unspeakable damage all over England, but few places suffered more yn ye parsonage here. For there was one long barn blown down, all ye rest of ye barns, outhouses, stables, and ricks of corn were unthatched, ye whole dwelling house uncovered, ye lead upon ye chancell shrivelled up like a scrowl, and ye tower and body of ye church much damnified. At ye same time the Right Rev. Richard Kidder, Bishop of Bath and Wells, together with

his Lady, were destroyed in y^r^ palace at Wells. But by^e^ Providence of God both man and beast escaped all manner of hurt in these parts.'

An entry in the following year, dated November 27, 1704, tells us what the damage caused by this hurricane cost the parson :

'About y^s^ time I cast up what my charges had been in building a new barn, in ye alterations of my house, and in repairing y^e^ greatest part of ye damage occasioned by y^e^ storm, and y^e^ sum amounted to £140 at ye lowest computation ; ye remaining part of my charge will, I suppose, come to near £30.'

And in Hawstead register we find this entry :

'1703. Nov. 25. and 26. in the evening of both those days there were very considerable tempests of thunder and lightning ; and 27^th^ in the morning, there was a most terrifying hurricane, intermixt with thunder, that threw down chimnies, barns, trees, and horses, in several places, and destroyed many persons by land : and at sea there were fourteen men of war lost, among which was a real admiral, besides abundance of merchant ships to an extraordinary value.'

And the storm that occurred at Loughborough on the last day of July, 1735, is noteworthy, for, according to the account given, 'there happened such an Inundation of water in the town that never was heard of by the ancients occasioned by a very great Tempest of Thunder Lightning and Rain which continued from half an hour after nine to half an hour after three in the afternoon to the great astonishment of all y^e^ Parishioners and Country

both, it being on the Market Day Thursday. The brooks from the Forest came down with such violence that in the space of an hour ran through all the houses on the left hand the Malt Mill Lane over the Door Thresholds and thro' the yards down to the Shambles. And both streams meeting at the end of the Shambles ran over the highest place on the Conwall ; and thro all the houses Gats places and low Rooms on the West side of the Market Place insomuch that the waters stood up to their Bed sides in their Parlers and floated their vessels in the cellars, and would take a Horse up to the Belly ; and at the bottom of the Swan Street up to the Saddle, and ran over the walls of the Bridge going into the Rushes, and burst down a garden wall on the right hand the Bridge, and so got more Liberty and then speedily abated to the astonishment of all the Spectatours: which might say with the Psalmist, 'Oh come hither and behold the Works of the Lord what Destruction He hath brought upon the earth and likewise—

'Thou art a God that doth foreshow thy wonders every Hour
And so doth make the People know thy virtue and thy Power
The Clouds that were both thick and Black did rain most plentiously
The Thunder in the air did crack his shafts abroad did fly'—

to conclude from Lightning and Tempest from Plague Pestilence and Famine from battel and Murder and from Sudden Death Good Lord deliver us. Amen.'

Perhaps one of the most extraordinary storms

recorded is the great snow-storm of January 16, 1614-15, one of the many accounts of which is preserved in the parish register of Youlgrave, Derbyshire, under the heading 'A Memoriall of the Great Snow Storm.'

'It covered,' runs the narrative, 'the earth five quarters deep upon the plain, and for heaps or drifts of snow, they were very deep, so that passengers, both horse and foot, passed over gates, hedges and walls. It fell at ten several times, and the last was the greatest, to the great admiration and fear of all the land, for it came from the four pts of the world, so that all the c'ntryes were full, yea, the South p'te as well as these mountaynes. It continued by daily encreasing until the 12th day of March (without the sight of any earth, eyther upon hilles or villeges) uppon wch daye, being the Lordes Day it began to decrease; and so by little and little consumed and wasted away, till the eight and twentieth day of May, for then all the heapes or drifts of snow were consumed, except one upon Kinder Scout, wch lay till Witson Week.'

And the Croydon register, under February 14, 1614-15, says: 'This was the day of the terrible snow, and the Sunday following a greater.'

It seems that this storm was followed by a drought, and from the same source we learn that 'there was no rayne fell uppon the earth from the 25th day of March till the 2nd day of May, and then there was but one shower, after which there fell none tyll the 18th day of June, and then there fell another; after yt there fell none at all till the 4th day of August, after which tyme there was

sufficient rayne uppon the earth; so that the greatest pt of the land, especially the South pts were burnt upp both corne and hay an ordinary sum̃er load of hay was at £2 and little or none to be gott for money.'

The great frost of 1607 is incidentally alluded to in Tottenham parish register:

'Edward Terrill, a fool or innocent, who was brought up in M^r George Kemp's house, at Tottenham parsonage, and at other places where the said M^r Kempe dwelt for many years, was buried upon Wednesday the 13^th day of Januarie, 1607-8. The ground in the churchyard so hard frozen that it could hardlie be pearced with a mattock or pickaxe. Note. The Thames frozen over.'

This frost began the week before Christmas, and lasted till the end of January. The Thames was first frozen over near London Bridge. It acquired such a firmness and consistency that we are told it became the roadway between London and Westminster and between Southwark and London. An amusing picture of the Thames thus frozen over is given in Lysons' 'Environs' (iii. 543):

'Thirst you for beere, ale, usquibah, or for victuals? there you buy it, because you may tell on another day how you dined upon the Thames. Are you cold with going over? You shall, ere you come to the midst of the river, spie some ready with pannes of coals to warm your fingers. If you want fruit after you have dined there be costermongers to serve you at your call. There were games of nine-holes &

pidgeon holes in great abundance. Among other things, that will in times to come look to be remembered, this is one—that there were two barbers' shops in the fashion of booths, with signes, and other properties of that trade belonged to them, fixed on the yce; to which many numbers of persons resorted, and (albeit they wanted no shaving) yet would they here be trimmed, because another day they might report that they lost their hair between the Bank-side and London. Both these shoppes were still so full that the workmen thought every day had been Saturday, never had they more barbarous doinges for the time—there was both olde polling & cold polling.'

This memorable frost is made the subject of a special entry in the Croydon register, where, under December, 1607, it is recorded that 'the greatest frost began the 9th day of this month, it ended on Candlemas Even.'

In the Nantwich register it is thus described:

'In this yeare 1607 was an extreame great ffrost which began about St. Andrew's Day, before Christyde, and continued till the first week of Lent following, which was about ix weekes. The extremity whereof caused great scarsety of water for Cattell soe that many dyed in sundry places of this land. Tames at London was frosen 5 foote thick. The same forced many suche as were deseased to yeald to nature; especially ould people. The Lord in mercy soften our frosen hearts as we may better imbrace the Word of God and be freed from the lyke punishements.'

Another great frost was that of 1683-84. It was of eight weeks' duration, and is made the subject of a memorandum in the register of Holy Rood Church, Southampton :

'This yeare was a great Frost, which began before Cristmasse, so that y^e^ 3^rd^ & 4^th^ dayes of this month of February ye river of Southampton was frossen all over and covered with ice from Calshott Castle to Redbridge and Tho: Martaine ma^r^ of a vessell went upon y^e^ ice from Berry near Marchwood to Milbrook Point. And y^e^ river at Ichen Ferry was so frossen over that severall persons went from Beauvois Mill to Bittern Farme forwarde & backwards."

On the other hand, occasional reference is made to the excessive heat. The register of Loughborough, for instance, records the great heat of the summer of the year 1808, and adds that on 'Wednesday, July 13^th^, the heat was so intense that in consequence thereof many People died, especially they that were at work in the fields, also a great number of Horses, particularly coach-horses drawing stage-coaches. The thermometer as high as 92.' And according to the Arlingham register just two centuries beforehand, 'there was a most extreame hott somm̃er, in so much that many died with heat.'

But, as nowadays, the weather in most years has varied, and an entry in the parish register of Mayfield, Sussex, gives some interesting particulars respecting the season of 1626:

'In the former part of this summer there was an extraordinary great fall of raine, and apparent

danger of famine, whereupon a publicke faste was proclaimed throughout the kingdom to be kept on the 2nd August, which accordingly being performed, it pleased the Lord in great mercy, the very same day to send a comfortable sunshine, and after that very seasonable and fair harvest-weather, the like whereof has seldom been with so little intermission or mixture of rain, herein verifying his promise, Psalm l—"Thou shalt call upon me in the time of trouble and I will deliver thee." Our duty followeth "And thou shalt glorify me." Μόνῳ Θεῷ δόξα.'

An eclipse was often made the subject of a special entry, the day on which it happened having been commonly designated 'a dark or black day,' as at Brignal, Yorkshire :

'1652. March 29. The darke Monday the Sunn being eclipsed 10 in 12 that is ten parts in twelve darkened, so that the day seemed as twilight.'

In the register of Langtree, Devonshire, under the date of April 22, 1715, the following note appears: 'Memorand—The sun totally eclipsed abt 9 in ye morning (*opus mirand*).'

And on September 13, 1699, at St. Andrew's, Newcastle, 'the sun and the mune was in the clips betwixt nin and ten in the morning and was darkish about three quarters of an hour.'

In the year 1618 some excitement was caused throughout the country by the appearance of a comet ; for, according to the superstitious belief of those times,

> 'Comets we see by night, whose shagg'd portents
> Foretell the coming of some dire events.'

And so, with dread forebodings, was penned the following memorandum in the register of Nantwich:

'This yeare last past, 1618, in the month of November many times there appeared eastward a Blazing Starr, betokenninge godds judgements towards us for Sine. the lord in mercye be mercifull unto us.'

The arrival in the year 1680 of another comet seems to have caused some excitement, an event which was considered worthy of being registered by the parson of Crowhurst, Sussex, who has left this memorandum:

'A blazing starre appeared in y^e^ kgdom in y^e^ yeare 1680: it did first shew itself 10^th^ December y^t^ yeare 80 which did stream from y^e^ south west to y^e^ middle of y^e^ heaven broader y^n^ that a Raine Bow by farre, and continued till y^e^ latter end of February.'

At Collumpton, Devon, on March 19, 1719, 'in the evening between seven and eight a great light was seen'; and a similar one is recorded as occurring at Huddlesceugh, Cumberland, in 1653. On March 30, 1716, 'a strange sort of light in the aire' is noted in the parish register of Chapel-en-le-Frith, which was, no doubt, an unusually brilliant appearance of the Northern Lights. The same night on which this appearance was noted at Chapel-en-le-Frith it also caused considerable consternation in other Peak villages. At Hartington, along with a similar appearance which was noticed on the 6th of the same month, it was so vivid and caused so much alarm as to

form the subject of a ballad in a chap-book of the period :

'On the Strange and Wonderful Sight that was seen in the Air on the 6th of March, 1716.

'The sixth of March—kind neighbours, this is true—
A wonder in the sky came to my view;
I pray believe it, for I tell no lye,
There's many more did see it as well as I.

'I was on travel, and was very late—
To speak the truth, just about daylight's gate;
My heart did tremble, being all alone,
To see such wonders—the like was never known.

'The first of all so dark it was to me,
That much ado my way I had to see;
I turn'd me round to see some lights appear,
And then I saw those wonders in the air.

'These lights to me like great long spears did show,
Sharp at end—kind neighbours, this is true;
I was so troubled I could not count them o'er,
But I suppose there was above a score.

'Then I saw like blood it did appear,
And that was very throng among the spears;
I thought the sky would have opened in my view,
I was so daunted I knew not what to do.

'The next I saw two clouds meet fierce together,
As if they would have fought one another;
And darkened all these spears excepting one:
They gave a clash and quickly they were gone.

'The very last day in the same month, I'm told,
Many people did strange sights behold
At Hartington—the truth I will not spare:
That night they saw great wonders in the air.

'This Hartington it is in Derbyshire,
And credible persons living there;
They have declared that wonders they did view
The very last night in March it's certain true.'*

* Quoted in the *Reliquary*, vol. vi., pp. 230, 231.

In the register, too, of Langtree, Devon, we find this entry:

'March ye 19, 1718, ab^{t} 8 in y^{e} evening a great amazing meteor Light was seen in y^{e} air; after y^{is} an uncommon Thunder was heard; and y^{e} Light separating ab^{t} y^{e} middle soon disappeared.'

Earthquakes, again, are noticed. Thus a quaint entry in the Nantwich register speaks of an earthquake in 1612-13 thus:

'This same yeare on the 18th March chaunced a terrible earthquake between 7 and 8 of the Clocke in the forenoone w^{ch} came with a most fearfull noyse and horrible shakeinge, the space of 3 minutes, w^{ch} is noe doubt a sure signe that the cominge of Christ is at hand, and even at the Dores.'

A memorandum in the Aylestone registers, under June 1, 1684, chronicles a collection made for Runswick, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, 'the town sunk by earthquake, and the inhabitants loss besides houses, above twelve hundred pounds.' The sum collected amounted to six shillings and sixpence.

In the register of St. Mary Magdalene, Canterbury, the following entry has been crossed out: 'The great shake of y^{e} earth was September ye 8, 1692.' After it comes an entry relating to one Richard Kingnorth, who was hanged for 'stealeing a hors,' and then follows: 'The greate shake of the earth was September the 8: 1692.'

But, as it has been pointed out, the wrong date is given for this earthquake. The event was

recorded twice, by two different persons, and it is impossible to say why the first entry was crossed out. Evelyn apparently refers to this earthquake as having occurred a week later—September 15, 1692: 'There happened an earthquake, which, though not so great as to do any harm in England, was universal in all these parts of Europe. It shook the house at Wotton.'

Another earthquake is noticed at Exeter on July 19, 1727: 'Between four and five of the clocke in the morning, all the houses in Exeter did shake with an earthquake that people shakt in their beds from one side to the other, and was all over England, and in some places beyond sea, but did little damage.'

And on November 18, 1795, we learn from the Loughborough register how at about 'half an hour after eleven o'clock this night here the earth quaked so as to awake several people, and caused some house bells to ring.' In a Sheffield register similar shocks on April 2 and 4, 1750; April 19, 1754, and November 1, 1785, are alluded to.

The Rector of East Hoathley, Sussex, used both pen and pencil to record the fact of a singular appearance in the heavens on February 17, 1638:

'A parhelion on each side of the sun was seen by many, with a bow over the true sun, with the ends upwards in the morning in this form. "Consider the work of God, for who can make that straight which he has made crooked?" (Eccles. vii. 13).'*

* See 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. iv., p. 270.



CHAPTER XIII.

STRANGE SIGHTS.

THE love of the marvellous has never failed to attract attention, and at all times sensational shows have proved a lucrative venture. At the same time, one would scarcely expect to find instances of these recorded in the parish register, amongst matters of serious and religious import. But oftentimes the parson jotted down anything that peculiarly interested him, and which had come under his observation in the course of the week.

Thus, the register of St. Nicholas', Durham, has this curious entry:

'1568. Mem. That a certaine Italian brought into the Cittie of Durham the eleventh day of June, in the year above sayd a very strange & monstrous serpent in length sixteene feet, in quantitie and dimensions greater than a horse; which was taken and killed by speciall pollicie in Œthiopia within the Turkes Dominions. But before it was killed it had devoured—as it is

credibly thought—more than one thousand persons, and destroyed a whole country.'

Shows of the Barnum type were very common in days gone by, bands of travelling conjurers and showmen going from town to town with their highly sensational bills of fare. An entry in Loughborough register records how in the year 1579 a man was slain by a lioness 'which was brought into the towne to be seen of such as would give money to see her. He was sore wounded in sundry places, and was buried on the 26th day of August.' The stories, too, are very varied in their character, but, from whatever source derived, they savour strongly of the marvellous. Thus, according to the statement of the parish clerk of Firmingley, Notts, the following extraordinary occurrence happened in July, 1707, of which he was himself an eye-witness:

'Zachariah Bolton, riding with his gun on Mr Barnardiston's bay horse into "Auckley Colt Field," found five stags herded about two hundred yards west from ye bottom of the "Long Hedge." He fired amongst them, and disabled one in the hinder parts; then quitting his horse, he caught the stag by the hind leg, and called to Jarah Wood and myself, who were not far off, for help, but the stag struggling and braying, the horse took him by the neck, and beat him with his fore-foot till he lay still, then we took him alive, laid him on the horse and carried him to the parsonage house at Firmingley, into the little court-yard before the kitchen door, where he was killed and drest, by the order of John Harvey

Esq^re^ of Ickwell Bury, who was there present, and had before given us an order to go about the said transaction. The truth of this I am ready to attest upon oath if so required.'

A gruesome and highly strange occurrence is recorded in Baunton parish register as having taken place in the year 1646, which we quote below:

'In this parish of Baunton, in the Clarkes House—one Richard Syfolly—upon St. Matthias Day, 1646, about eleven of the Clock in the forenoon there rose out of an old dry table bord of birch,—on which bord I Henry Topp minister there now wright these words Aug^st^ 24^th^ being St. Bartholomew's Day—a water, reddish of the colour of blood, and so continued till rising and runninge alonge and downe the Table, all that afternoone, and the nighte followinge till the next day, and about the hour when it first began, and so ceased. That same day, St. Matthias (I remember) I read prayers in the chaple but was not called to be an eye witness of this strange sight, and was informed of it by the eye witnesses the very next Lordes Day when I came to officiat in the Chapell. Many of the neighbours heard their reports as well as my selfe Henry Topp who have it avered under their said hands and marks.'*

Equally curious is a ghost story which forms the subject of a memorandum in the register of Brisley, Norfolk, and which is deserving of notice:

* See 'Gloucestershire Notes and Queries,' 1887, vol. ii., p. 71.

'Dec. 12, 1706. I, Robert Withers, M.A. Vicar of Gately, do insert here a story which I had from undoubted hands, for I have all the moral certainty of the truth of it possible :—

'Mr. Grove went to see Mr. Shaw on the 2nd of August last. As they sat talking in the evening, says Mr. Shaw, "On the 21st of the last month as I was smoking my pipe and reading in my study between eleven and twelve at night, in comes Mr. Naylor—formerly Fellow of St. John's College, but had been dead full four years. When I saw him I was not much affrighted, and I asked him to sit down, which accordingly he did for about two hours, and we talked together. I asked him how it fared with him. He said, 'Very well.' 'Were any of our old acquaintances with him?' 'No' (at which I was much concerned); 'but Mr. Orchard will be with me soon, and yourself not long after.' As he was going away I asked him if he would not stay a little longer, but he refused. I asked him if he would call again, 'No; he had but three days' leave of absence, and he had other business.'"

'N.B. Mr. Orchard died soon after. Mr. Shaw is now dead. He was formerly fellow of St. John's College, an ingenuous good man. I knew him there, but at his death he had a college living in Oxfordshire, and here he saw the apparition.'

A correspondence which passed between the Rev. John Hughes, of Jesus College, Cambridge, and the Rev. Mr. Bonwicke, very shortly after the event referred to took place, was subsequently

published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, gave more exact and circumstantial particulars of this mysterious affair. It is said that Mr. Shaw had been a noted enemy to a belief in apparitions, and in society had been accustomed to inveigh against any credence being placed in them; but after the presumed interview with the apparition of his old friend, he is said to have altered his views about the spiritual life.

The Lambeth register contains the burial of the celebrated astrologer and physician, Simon Forman, who, says Lilly, 'was very judicious and fortunate in horary question and sicknesses'; and respecting his death the same authority tells the following curious story:

'The Sunday night before he died, his wife and he being at supper in their garden house, she being pleasant, told him that she had been informed he could resolve whether man or wife should die first—Whether shall I (quoth she) bury you or no? Oh Trunco (for so he called her), thou wilt bury me, but thou wilt sore repent it. Yea, but how long first? I shall die, said he, ere Thursday night. Monday came, all was well; Tuesday came, he was not sick; Wednesday came, and still he was well; with which his impertinent wife did taunt him in the teeth. Thursday came and dinner was ended, he very well, he went down to the water side and took a pair of oars, to go to some buildings he was in hand with, in Puddle Dock. Being in the middle of the Thames he suddenly fell down, saying, An

impost, an impost, and so died. A most sad storm of wind immediately ensued.'

An entry in the Croydon register records 'a description of a monstrous birth, born of the body of Rose Easterman, wife of John Easterman, being a child with two heads, four arms, four legs, one body, one navel, and distinction of two male children, and was born the 27th of January, 1721-2.'

And among the burials of the register of Trinity Church, Chester, this memorandum is given:

'John Brookes Mason who poynted the Steple 1610 and made many showes and pastymes on the Steple of Trinity, and also on the toppe of St. Peter's Steple as many thousands did witnesse, dyed 10 July and bur 11 July in the Church Yard (1614) broke his necke going down a payre of stayres by the Church.'



CHAPTER XIV.

LOCAL EVENTS.

IN many parishes the register served as a kind of note-book for the parson, and oftentimes contains miscellaneous memoranda of local interest —'brief but pregnant notes on passing events, and the ever-varying circumstances of parochial life.'*

Dr. Kennett, Bishop of Peterborough (1718-1728), in his first Visitation to his clergy, remarked on this subject: 'One more thing I would intimate to you, that you are not only obliged to enter the day and year of every christening, wedding, and burial, but it is left to your discretion to enter down any notable incident of times and seasons, especially relating to your own parish and the neighbourhood of it. . . . If such memorable things were fairly entered, your parish registers would become chronicles of many strange occurrences that would not otherwise be known,

* 'The Registers of Prestbury,' Record Society, 1881. Introduction, pp. xii, xiii.

and would be of great use and service for posterity to know.'

Some parsons seem to have acted on this principle, and to have entered even the most ordinary and trivial occurrences.

Church robberies are occasionally noticed. An entry in Hackney register, dated October, 1689, runs thus:

'Stolen out of the vestry of St. John, Hackney, on the 23rd inst, one new green bible, two surplices, an old gown, a green velvet Case for the pulpit Cushion, the hearse Cloth, one green pulpit Cloth, and a small sum of money.'

And under the year 1633, the following curious entry occurs in the parish register of North Wingfield:

'Upon the first day of August or there aboute their was a great clock plum stolen out of the steeple, which was eight or nine stone weight, sum strong body did steal yt or else it could not have been carried away for I could not lift it with one hand, at the same time there was a kaye left in at Booth (?) Savage house which did unlock the Chapple door when they pleased to goe and ringe when I was out . . . And manie times the Churche doores was left open when I never did know of it by this means allso by going into the Chappell window & breaking the . . . door into the Chancell. At there pleasure the Church was made common and doores left open alnight manie times.'

We may also quote another curious entry which

occurs in the register of Bexley, under the year 1683:

'That in the week before Palm Sunday about the 18th March, I Benjamin Huntington, Vicar of Bexley, in the County of Kent, for ye discharge of my duty and conscience, did certifie to the Churchwardens of the parish aforesaid, that there were severall pieces of plate, vizt two Silver Flagons and Silver Almes Dish (a Bason) alienated from the use of the Church, to which they were given by pious and generous benefactors and had been ever since the times of the late horrid Rebellion. And did then likewise according to the best Information acquaint them yt they were deposited by Mr Nicholas Franckwell, sometime Vicar, in the hands of Mrs Anne Grymes.'

A fire, as nowadays, occasionally caused no small excitement in village life, as may be gathered from the following memorandum, recorded in Mayfield register under the year 1611:

'Upon the Saboath daye, being the 15th daye of Maye, about 8 o'clock in the night arose a great fire in the house of Thos. Stephen, at the west end of Mayfield towne, and burnt downe both his house and the next house adjoining, and sett on fire another house and also a barne. The fire by God's providence was put out, the whole towne being in great danger, by reason of the violence of the wind, which then was towards the west.'

And a memorandum in the Nantwich register relates how 'upon Thursday, the 29th October in this yeare [1629], about 12 of the Clocke in the

night there happened a great and sodden fire in the house of one Thomas Jackson, in Welche Row, beginning in a chamber on [over] M^r^ Wettenhall's gates and lastinge for the space of almost two hours consuming the roofs of three bayes of buildings and more. How the fire began is uncertain, but thought to be through the carelessness and negligence of some wretchles person dwelling and inhabiting in the said house of the said Thomas Jackson by a Candle; which fire although it were very furious and raging yet by the providence of Almightie God and very many ready and willing people which desperately ventured for the quenchinge thereof (blessed be God) the same was staydd without further losse.'

Speaking of fires, it may be noticed that occasionally the parish register has perished through fire, as happened about the year 1830, when Lewisham Church was destroyed, together with the registers dating from the year 1550. Similarly, in the year 1857, the vestry of the church of Penwortham, in Lancashire, was burnt, and with it the registers commencing in 1586. The Great Fire of London is incidentally noticed in the register of All Hallows, Bread Street:

'1667, June 19. Was born and christened, Michael, son of Michael and Phœbe Pyndar; but by reason of the dreadful fire, was born in Coleman Street, in Sir William Bateman's house, where many of this parish for some time inhabited.'*

It has been suggested that Sir William had,

* Burn, 'Parish Registers,' p. 87.

like many others, after this calamitous fire thrown open his mansion as a refuge for the homeless, many hundreds of whom there must have been.

In the register of St. Dionis Backchurch, under May 20, 1667, this memorandum is given:

'M^rs^ Martha Bennett, wife of M^r^ John Bennett, Pewterer, that dwelt in the parish at the time of the great fire, dyed the seaventeenth day of May, and was buried in the ruines of the Church the twentieth day of May.'

And under June 14 of the same year this entry occurs:

'M^r^ Thomas Stonehouse, Apothecary, an Inhabitant in the Parish at the time of the said fire, dyed the thirteenth day of June, and was buried in the ruines of the Church, in the body or Middle part of the Church, the fourteenth day of June 1667.'

From August, 1666, to the end of 1667, no entries were made in the register of St. Antholin, London, owing, no doubt, to the Great Fire, from which the church suffered. It was, however, restored about the year 1682 by Sir Christopher Wren, and was made the church of the then united parishes of St. Antholin and St. John Baptist.

And a brief in the parish of Loughborough records that 'upon Friday, the 5^th^ day of October, 1666, there happened, about twelve o'clock in the daytime, a sad and lamentable fire which by the space of two hours, burnt and consumed down to the ground fifty dwelling-houses, with malt houses, etc., to the value of £1924 1^s^ 4^d^. And

that also upon Monday, the 12th day of November next following, there happened another fire, which in a short time burnt to the ground seven bays of building, some of them filled with Corn ; and the loss thereby did amount to fifty pounds, ten shillings & sixpence.'

An entry in the register of Collingbourne, Kingston, records how there happened on 'Tuesday night October 21st 1662, about the middest of the night a sodeine fearefull and lamentable fyer in the dwellinge house of Henry Seymore of Sunton, gent, and as they saide about 90 yeares of age, in wch saide fyer the saide Henry was burned in his bed ; but some small part of him being afterwards found was buried the Fryday followeinge, being October 24th 1662.'

A similar memorandum occurs in the register of Hinckley:

'Sept. 5, 1728, a sudden and terrible fire about noon destroyed the new house of Anne Woodward, widow, and the houses, barns, stables, outhouses, goods, wool, and harvest produce, stocking-frames, and shop-goods of William Abbot, William Alwey, Samuel Allen, Thomas Brown, Joseph Evans, Thomas Hurst, Joseph Laurence, Sarah Paul, etc. . . . and of eighty other persons ; the whole loss, upon a low and the ill-judged computation of twelve regulators, was £3434 to the great detriment of those people, and of all the town.'

A royal hunt in the neighbourhood of a quiet village was a great event, and as such was considered worthy of being duly chronicled by the

parson of Fordham, Cambridgeshire, who has made this memorandum:

'1604. Upon Wednesday y^e^ 27 of Feb^r^ y^e^ year above written y^e^ High and mighty Prince James by y^e^ grace of God King of Great Britain France and Irelande, Defender of y^e^ Faith, &c.—did hunt ye hare with his own hounds in our Fields of Fordham and did kill six near a place called Blackland and afterwards did take his repast in y^e^ same Fields at a Bush near unto King's Path.'

And an entry in one of the registers of Greystoke relates to the annual celebration appointed by James I. in memory of his deliverance from the Gowrie plot:

'1603, August. 'ffrydaye the v^th^ day was comnded for to be keapt holy daye yearely from cessation of laybor w^th^ gyvinge of thanks for the kyngs most excelent matye for his ma^tyes^ p'servation and deliverance from the crewell conspiracie practized against his maties pson in Scotland that v^th^ daye of August 1600.'

But neither the English nor the Scotch were prepared to believe in the existence of this alleged conspiracy; and a modern writer tells us that when this annual thanksgiving was ordered in England and Scotland 'the English laughed at the farce, and the Scotch were indignant at the impiety.' The holiday was kept at Greystoke for three successive years, and then seems to have been superseded by the 5th of November thanksgiving for James's deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot. Under November 5, 1606, we find this memorandum recorded: 'The sayde daye was kenges

holyday and the most part of the men . . . in the pish . . . at dyvine service.'*

On October 13, 1661, the steeple of St. Peter's, Sandwich, fell down and demolished the south aisle, a curious note descriptive of which occurrence is duly entered in the register :

'That same day the same year was a Sabbath day, there were two sermons preached there that day, and it fell down within six or seven hours after the people were gone home, presently after one quarter of an hour past eleven o'clock at night. Had it fell at the time when the people were there, the chiefest of the Town & Parish had been killed, & buried under the rubbish & stones and timber ; but the Lord was so gracious as to show a miraculous mercy in that judgment, for there was no man, woman, or child, killed or hurt and very few heard it. The rubbish was three fathom deep in the middle of the Church, the bells underneath it ; two or three rods long it lay.'

Under 1772, April 14, in Streatham register, this entry is given :

'Russell.—N.B. this person was always known under the guise or habit of a woman and answered to the name of Elizabeth as registered in this parish Nov. 21st 1669, but at death proved to be a man.'

A full account of this character is given under the head of 'Streatham Worthies' in Mr. Frederick Arnold's 'History of Streatham.' It appears from

* See 'Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archæological Society Transactions,' vol. i., p. 338.

the entries in the parish registers that his father, John Russell, had three daughters and two sons—William, born in 1668, and Thomas in 1672; and it is probable that the above person (commonly known as 'Betsy the Doctress') was one of these. Lysons tells that, in the course of his wanderings, this eccentric individual 'attached himself to itinerant quacks, learned their remedies, practised their calling, and that this knowledge, combined with his great experience, gained for him the reputation of being a most infallible doctress.' In his disguise he was a very convivial old lady, it being his practice to treat his companions at the village ale-house.

A similar case bearing on our subject is reported to have happened early in the present century. The person who acted as parish clerk, and was always dressed as a man, and had, moreover, been married to a woman some time before her death, was found at her decease to be a woman. And in the register of St. Bodolph, Aldgate, under July 17, 1655, we find this entry:

'William Clark, son of John Clark, a soldier, and Thomasine, his wife, who herself went for a souldier, and was billetted at the Three Hammers, in East Smithfield, about seven months, and after was delivered of this child . . . She had been a souldier by her own confession, about five years, and was some time Drummer to the Company.'

On the fly-leaf of one of the Bampton registers is this memorandum:

'The origin of the name of Mount-Owen was as follows: Some persons were passing by, when

the cottage at the top of the hill was in building; among whom was an eccentric old shoe-maker named John Neal, and he was asked to give it a title. He said it must be called Mount-Owen, the Rev. Hugh Owen being Vicar of one of the portions of Bampton at that time.'

To quote another entry in which the eccentricity of woman is further illustrated, we find in the register of Chapel-en-le-Frith, under March 12, 1717, the following strange adventure of a young girl narrated. It appears she was about thirteen years of age, and her name was Alice Phenix. She 'came to this town to a shop for half a stone of towe for her master, being an apprentice to Wm Ward of the Peak Forest. She went from this town in the evening and called at Peter Downs house, who lived then at Laneside. They sent her away in good time to have gone home. She turned again and was found at the house when they were going to bed. Peter called her in and sent her to bed with his daughter, next morning calling her up very soon he sent her away, but as they were going to plough found her again, and his son did chide her very ill, and she seemed then to make best haste home, but sitting down between two ruts in George Bouden's Part on Paislow, sat there that day and next, and Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday till noon. Two of which days, the 15th and 16th was the most severe snowing and driving that had been seen in the memory of man. This girl was found about one o'clock on Monday, by William Jackson, of Sparrowpit, and William Longden, her neighbour

in the Fforest. They carried her to the same house back again, to Peter Downe's house, and after she had got some refreshment, a little warm milk, could warm herself at the fire afterwards, and could turn her & move her legs, with her hands, and after was carried to her master's house that night, & is now—March 25, 1717—quite well, but a little stiff in her limbs. This was the Lord's doings.'

According to the State Papers, dated June 30, 1631, special measures were adopted for the relief of the poor in the hundred of Nantwich, with the result that in the following year the principal owners of property in the town signed an agreement, which was entered in the burial register as follows:

'Mem[d]—It is covenanted, promised and agreed by us the gentlemen and others the inhabitants of this Towne whose names are subscribed. That by reason our Towne is greatly oppressed with Inmates and Strangers continually cominge to reside amongst us without any restraynt, in regard whereof our own poore cannot so well be resieuved [received] as otherwise they might. That from henceforward, wee will not sett or let any of our houses or cottages to strangers dwellinge out of our Towne except they shall be such as shall be able to secure the Towne, by bond to the Churchwardens, for the time beinge, from any change that they or their ffamilies might draw upon ytt.'

An interesting memorandum in the second register-book of Mildenhall informs us that 'there

was lost at sea, with ye Duke going into Scotland, May 5, 82, E. of Roxburgh, L. O'Brian, L. Hopton, S^r^ Joseph Duglas, M^r^ Hide, with several of his officers & 130 seamen.'

It has been pointed out in the 'Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica' (v. 351) that the manuscript of this memorandum corresponds with entries written in the years 1680, 1681, and 1682, in which latter year the Duke of York, afterwards James II., nearly suffered shipwreck on his voyage to Scotland. The ship was the *Gloucester* frigate, which struck on a sandbank off Yarmouth. The Duke, with Colonel John Churchill, afterwards Duke of Marlborough, escaped with difficulty in the ship's barge. Robert, third Earl of Roxburgh; Lord O'Brien, son of the seventh Earl of Thomond; John Hope, Laird of Hopetoun; Sir Joseph Douglas, and the Hon. James Hyde, youngest son of Lord Chancellor Clarendon, and brother-in-law to the Duke, all perished.

And from the old register of Wigston, Leicestershire, it appears from a memorandum dated 1599 that moles were so general in this parish, that at one time as much as one guinea was paid to the mole-catcher for destroying them; and in the same year a further sum of £1 10s. was expended for destroying eighty-seven dozen and a half. This charge was defrayed by a twopenny levy upon every yard of land.

Entries of this kind, which we find scattered over the pages of the parish register, apart from their local interest, have in many cases an intrinsic value as recording facts illustrative of the past.

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THE END.

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